

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN
VISWA BHARATI
LIBRARY

273.2

उ 73

THE LAYMAN'S LIBRARY

Edited by F. C. BURKITT, MA., F.B.A.,
*Norvician Professor of Divinity in the
University of Cambridge,*

and the Rev. G. E. NEWSOM, M.A.,
*Professor of Pastoral Theology in King's
College, London, Reader at the Temple
Church.*

SOME ALTERNATIVES TO JESUS CHRIST

THE LAYMAN'S LIBRARY

Edited by F. C. BURKITT, M.A., F.B.A., Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, and the Rev. G. E. NEWSOM, M.A., Professor of Pastoral Theology in King's College, London, Reader at the Temple Church.

Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net each Volume.

THE FAITH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. By the Rev. ALEXANDER NAIRNE, B.D., Professor of Hebrew and Exegesis of the Old Testament at King's College, London. With a Preface by F. C. BURKITT, M.A., F.B.A., Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? OR REDEMPTION. A Study in the Doctrine of Atonement. By the Rev. J. G. SIMPSON, D.D., Canon and Precentor of St Paul's.

SOME ALTERNATIVES TO JESUS CHRIST. A Comparative Study of Faiths in Divine Incarnation. By JOHN LESLIE JOHNSTON, M.A., Fellow and Dean of Arts, Magdalen College, late Lecturer in Theology at New College, Oxford.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST. An Attempt to Appreciate the Main Lineaments of the Teaching of Christ in their Historical Proportion. By the Rev. EDWARD GORDON SELWYN, M.A., Warden of Radley, formerly Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of London.

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCHMANSHIP. By the Rev. G. E. NEWSOM, M.A., Professor of Pastoral Theology in King's College, London, Reader at the Temple Church.

CHURCH AND STATE. An Historical Sketch of the Church of England in its Relations with the State. By DOUGLAS EYRE, B.A., Barrister-at-Law.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL. By the Rev. PETER GREEN, M.A., Canon of Manchester.

DISCOVERY AND REVELATION. By the Rev. HAROLD FRANCIS HAMILTON, D.D., Professor of Pastoral Theology, Bishop's College, Lennoxville, Canada, 1907-10.

THE CHURCH IN HISTORY. A Study of its Continuity, Development, and Influence. By the Rev. ERIC MILNER-WHITE, M.A., Chaplain of King's College, Cambridge, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of London.

THE HOLY SPIRIT. By the Rev. A. E. RAWLINSON, M.A., Lecturer in Theology and Classics at Christ Church, Oxford, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Lichfield; formerly Tutor of Keble College.

Other Volumes are in Preparation and in Contemplation.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

SOME ALTERNATIVES TO JESUS CHRIST

**A Comparative Study of Faiths
in Divine³ Incarnation**

BY

JOHN LESLIE JOHNSTON, M.A.

**FELLOW AND SENIOR DEAN OF ARTS, MAGDALEN COLLEGE,
LATE RESIDENT LECTURER IN THEOLOGY AT NEW
COLLEGE, OXFORD**

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

•39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1914

All rights reserved

PREFACE

THE substance of this book was delivered as lectures on the list of the University Faculty of Theology at Oxford. These have been revised and expanded but the result retains a good deal of the lecture form. This will explain to some extent why the subject is dealt with in so partial and disjointed a fashion. But there are other reasons.

The question discussed in the book was forced upon me at the time of writing the lectures. A layman, who approaches the study of religion originally as a question of truth, may arrive at a position which will only allow him to be satisfied with some such solution of the world-problem as Christianity offers. This must include a definite faith in Divine Incarnation, laying stress on the historical appearance, human suffering, and abiding presence of the Saviour. But at this point one is faced by the fact that there are other religions which claim to present an Incarnate God. So for our own satisfaction it is necessary to consider their claims. It is as an attempt to deal with this problem from some such standpoint that I originally wrote, and now venture to publish, this discussion of the subject.

This study makes no claim to finality or complete-

ness, as will be obvious. It makes no pretence to expert knowledge in most of the vast field on which it touches. No doubt specialists in each part of it would disagree with some things that I have written. In a subject where, so to speak, one treads on the toes of experts round every corner, it behoves a man to go warily. All I have attempted to do is to present a tenable view on each point, based on a personal estimate of authoritative opinions. I hope that the general positions maintained can at least hardly be refuted on the evidence at present accessible.

At the same time I am perfectly aware how slender is the stock of detailed knowledge with which I have approached the subject. I make no claim to first-hand acquaintance with Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Arabic, or other Oriental languages, so that mistakes in scholarship are here very probable, but not important for the purpose of the book. On some sides of the subject my equipment is not, I trust, quite such a bare minimum. On Babi-Behaism, for instance, the main authorities so far as they are available in English, French, and German have been, at least, consulted. But in such a vast field as Hindu religion, I can hardly lay claim to more than a superficial and second-hand acquaintance with the chief points. On Hellenism, the New Testament, and Christianity itself one possesses perhaps slightly more right to speak, but almost

any conclusions in this sphere would be challenged, at any rate in some points, by a considerable body of more expert opinion. But with regard to the main features of Christianity, most readers, with the Gospels and Christendom before them, can and must judge for themselves.

After this explanation I have only to attribute, as is justly due, all that is good in this book to those who have made it possible, while accepting myself all blame for its many imperfections. I should especially wish to thank my late tutor and present colleague at Magdalen, Mr. Clement Webb, Wilde Reader in Natural Religion, for much help towards the general point of view from which I approached the subject. For advice on Buddhism I owe gratitude to Dr. Estlin Carpenter, the Principal of Manchester New College, and for aid with Hinduism to Mr. J. N. Farquhar, the literary secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in India. For much stimulus and help throughout my study for, and writing of, the book I am indebted more than I can say to various friends, especially Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Professor D. S. Cairns, and Mr. Edwyn Bevan.

Finally, to the editors of this series I must render hearty thanks for many useful suggestions, and to Mr. R. G. Longman for ready courtesy and assistance concerning the publication of the book.

J. L. J.

CUDDESDON, Christmas 1913.

ANALYSIS

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND METHOD OF TREATMENT

PAGE

I

A. PROBLEM :—

In history, Christ for the Christian not merely a Prophet, but the Son of God, and, as such, unique. Asserted against all weaker interpretations in the first centuries.

To-day, claims of other religions v. this—examples. Resultant Unitarianism ('Progressive Incarnation'), or Scepticism ('superstition'). Latter never satisfying to religious consciousness. Final struggle with rival religions.

Question of future for Christianity, not deity but uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

B. SUBJECT :—

Worship of incarnate deity in monotheistic (or monistic systems, excludes hero-worship, etc. (Apollonius—Nikal Seyn), with polytheistic or animistic background, includes (1) Religions of Enlightener—Buddhism; some forms of Hellenistic religion. (2) Hindu Bhakti to avatars—Vishnu-worship. (3) Shiah Mohammedanism—Babi-Behaism. All three as including whole development of religions.

C. METHOD :—

Comparative study of religion. (1) Historical (concrete facts). Temporal relations of religions—main line of development? (2) Psychological (consciousness of worshipper). Specific differences of experience, including object of devotion as far as recognised in it. (3) Normative (question of value-judgments), the tests of superiority and validity—direction in which evolution of religion points?

SOME ALTERNATIVES TO JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

PAGE

18.

EVIDENCE:—

A. Buddhist Scriptures after 250 years' oral tradition—

- (1) Pali Canon—dates doubtful. (2) Sanskrit—later and corrupt.

B. External evidence—

- (1) Megasthenes, c. 300 B.C. (2) Inscriptions throughout. (3) Chinese Pilgrims, 400, 518, 650 A.D.

HISTORY:—

Outer—

Personal life of Gautama, c. 550-480 B.C. Early Church, c. 480-280 B.C. Ashoka, fl. c. 250 B.C. (triumph of Buddhism in India). Milinda, fl. c. 150 B.C. (increasing corruption). Kanishka, fl. c. 50 A.D. (separation of Mahayana and Hinayana). Spread of Buddhism outside India, recrudescence of Brahmanism within, 100-500 A.D. (patriarchate transferred to China, 526). Decline and final extinction in India, close of development outside, 500-1000. To-day.

Inner—

The founder. Main lines of background in Indian thought—own motive, experiences, attainment. Saving truths, existence=sorrow; cause of sorrow=desire; extinction of desire=cure of sorrow. Final Temptation. Corollaries. Monastic ethics—driving power negative. The Buddha's agnosticism as to religion leaves room for corruptions, especially worship of Himself. Stages of development:—(1) Reference for teacher. (2) Speculation as to pre-existence. (3) Dogmatic formulation of incarnation. (4) Supersession by faith in Amida, etc. Final state of religion—theistic, with incarnations and future bliss.

CHAPTER III

BUDDHISM AS A RELIGION

42

Starting-point for Buddha and early followers, disgust of life, yet experience of release owing to self-surrender

(Hindu aristocrats?)—aim, extinction of consciousness. Limitations:—(1) Unsocial morality—self-centred perspective—in practice, real devotion to 'Norm' and kindness. (2) Sensitive statement of problem—solution inadequate and system unsatisfying because irreligious. (3) Intellectualism and scepticism as to ultimate questions produce general tolerance and reasonableness, but fail to strengthen. (4) The Buddha impersonal, not a unique personality, but a light-bringer for his epoch—hence general deviation from his teaching and even from the worship of him. Present state variegated but only partially spiritual or moral—loss of touch with historical. Future prospects.

CHAPTER IV

HINDUISM 64

FACTS AND HISTORY:—

Present predominance of 'Bhakti' in India (i.e. devotion to incarnations of Vishnu). Principal tenets. Antecedents. Present form received in Mediæval Reformation. Previous belief and practice. Alterations made in them. Sources and early history of these. The Bhagavad-gita. Vedas and Upanishads. Krishna-worship. Summary.

CHAPTER V

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF
HINDU BHAKTI 80

Spiritual monotheism allied with impersonal philosophy—tolerance of secondary worships. Comparison with defects in popular Christianity. Belief in incarnation of Supreme dignifying human nature, but no finality or completeness. Manner of conceiving incarnation. Salvation in personal union without absorption—tends towards individualism, dualism, quietism. Resulting from characteristics of devotion—non-historical, abstract, unsocial, clear personal figure and moral drive lacking. No cross. Estimate.

CHAPTER VI

	PAGE
BABI-BEHAISM	97

COURSE OF EVENTS:—

1844, the Bab—previous history and meaning of title. Shiah doctrine of Imam. Immediate antecedents—Sheikhism. Other ingredients, especially Sufi mystic background.

Early success—reasons—persecution—change in claims of Bab—significance. Shifting Imamate. Death and successor, 1852.

Later history—progress and schism. Beha's modernism—death, 1897. Present state.

CHAPTER VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF BABI-BEHAISM	111
--	-----

Crucial similarities to Christianity—strong monotheism with apocalyptic hope—rising tide of revival—loyalty to dying divinity—indubitable personal holiness of claimant. Vitality of foundation.

Critical point—view of person.

Differences pointed by course of events—prophecy passing into incarnation and back—mediumistic function of both. Babi books by the Bab (not about him).

Doctrine—double strain—Shiah predominant—divinity in terms of reflection of light—denial of true union owing to deistic presuppositions—no personality and only temporary office.

CHAPTER VIII

HELLENISM	125
---------------------	-----

Two features important as pre-Christian and pre-parative—

- (1) Personal devotion to historical figures.
- (2) Faith in dying and rising Gods.

(1) 'Conversion' in Greek and Greco-Roman world—Æschylus—Heraclitus, intellectual type* (salvation by deliverance from false forms and fears).

Devotion to Enlightener:—

(a) Pythagoras—reverence for 'Him' as 'demon' of society—mystic tradition.

(b) Epicurus—first-hand testimony, Lucretius—his sense of deliverance and personal gratitude to the Master. Epicurus's own doctrine 'atheistic'—release from 'religion,' yet real force and closeness of personal relation to followers, e.g. memorial feast.

(2) Mysteries—origin in vegetation-gods of spring and autumn (Thammuz). In Greece Demeter at Eleusis, indigenous—dramatic. Early arrivals, Dionysus (Thrace)—ecstatic. Later, Attis-Cybele (Phrygia), Isis-Osiris (Hermes, Egypt)—sacramental. Monotheistic tendency, Oriental influence, cosmopolitanism. Experience of redemption from power of demons, stars, the body, death. Salvation through knowledge, ecstasy, immortality. Combines philosophy and superstition, symbolism and magic, rationalism and mysticism.

Distinguishing marks—'gnosis'—non-ethical—no 'church'—Saviour non-historical—does not 'come down.'

CHAPTER IX

HISTORICAL CONNECTION WITH CHRISTIANITY . 141

1. *Buddhism*.—Gautama and Western influences? Ashoka and Hellenism? Gundaphorus and Gandhara art—St. Thomas?—Mahayana and the north-west frontier—Docetic and Gnostic ideas in India—transported to China and Japan. Nestorians already there. Double conclusion.

2. *Hinduism*.—Apostolic advent?—the Nestorians at Kottayam and Kalyana in the sixth century—Christianity strong in South India—rise of Bhakti revival in

same quarter—remarkable similarities—simplest explanation long-deferred reaction to Christian influence. The Child Krishna. Probable partial dependence but native trend.

3. *Babi-Behaism*.—Jesus in the Koran—pre-Shiah Persia Christian—some Christian heirlooms. Sufis' equation of Koran, O.T., N.T. Direct influence on Bab? Henry Martyn's Bible. Possible unconscious dependence on scripture and tradition.

Tentative generalisation. Christian influence reinforces native tendency.

CHAPTER X

THE VALUE OF NON-CHRISTIAN BELIEFS . . . 163

Point of view Start from generally felt need. 'Exigency' and satisfaction. Instinct gradually trained to find expression. Want only explicable by possibility, especially as a 'religion of the higher culture'—but only implies existence of object somewhere—not realised in non-Christian developments, *Aut Christus aut nullus*. But true faith=true access—but only in good faith. In long run historical person necessary. If true, all explained—Christ of hope, yet new in fact. Special features in fulfilment. Other ideas inadequate. Two points of superiority. Advantages.

CHAPTER XI

HISTORICAL FEATURES OF CHRISTIANITY . . . 181

The good news of Jesus new yet old—the hope of Israel, prophets, apocalyptists, Luke i. and ii.—elements and characteristics and varieties—the Kingdom and the King—a Person becomes central in the hope. Two main forms:—(1) Davidic king (usually chiliastic) rising to (2) Son of Man, Daniel? Enoch—marks and influence on N.T. (3)? Suffering Servant, Isaiah ii., re-interpreted—by Jesus? Importance as psychological setting.

Immediate antecedents—John, and the heightening of expectancy—Jesus' Baptism, the Vision and Voice—Messiahship—defined in Temptation—John's death a sign—the message of the Christ—the Messiah misunderstood—His protests. In Person, but not yet in function—'The baptism wherewith I am being baptized'—the last trials—triumph? Result of Death on disciples—new life—Jesus, Messiah, alive—His Spirit—His Coming. At first the One thought *Maranatha*—slowly the consciousness of present possessions grows—re-interpretation of Messianism in terms of mysteries—Christ still central in belief and practice.

CHAPTER XII

THE MARKS OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTION TO CHRIST 198

1. Unswerving historicity of attitude—clear view of actual Person essential (not merely 'heavenly' or 'idea')—Christ's Figure in same tissue of events as the Christian. Spirit in the Church and individual always turning back to what once *was* on earth.

2. Uncompromising claim to uniqueness and finality. Early and continued intolerance of Christianity for other beliefs (contr. Buddhism in China, Greco-Roman Pantheon)—where it resigns this assertion Christianity, as such, disappears. (Si-An-Fu Inscription.)

3. Moral drive to imitation—faith always as producing works—never mere sense of 'dependence'—the Christian Church a saving organism. 'Love.' Christian idea and practice of charity unique—especially in emphasis on suffering and patience. 'The Christ that is to be.'

4. Progressive and expectant outlook. As world-view unparalleled except in Zoroastrianism, where dualism and no Christ—growth and hope. At root eschatological—the Kingdom, the Coming—that world and this. Golden age both past and future—Christian basis for hopefulness.

5. Belief in Spirit as Personal Presence of the Master (versus Sangha—inner light) yet informing both individual and society. Power of reproduction.

Epilogue.—Aims of study—resultant impression. Analogy of Christian religious consciousness with Greek æsthetic genius. The Coming. Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND METHOD OF TREATMENT

THE object of this book is rather to raise a question than to answer one. But in doing so attention can be called to certain facts which must provide the materials and basis for any solution. When I venture to point out some of these and to make a few remarks as to the way in which they may be dealt with, I do not wish to do much more than act as a showman who makes some suggestions in classification. We may hope that the question will then show signs of answering itself. As a problem this must here be presented first in outline, and then left to be studied under separate headings in the later chapters.

Christian View of Christ

First of all, it is incontestable that Christians of all times for which we possess any evidence have persistently regarded the Founder of their religion as very definitely *unique*. Further, He has been unique for them not merely with the uniqueness that

‘THE SON OF GOD’

the Mohammédan claims for the founder of Islam when he cries aloud, ‘There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah.’ In this capacity of supreme *prophet*, John the Baptist, than whom there was ‘none greater among those that are born of women,’ corresponds to Mohammed in Christian tradition. But Christianity has always regarded its Founder as something more—in one of the oldest phrases, as ‘the Son of God.’ I would select this term as representing the distinctive claim of Christianity for Jesus. It is one which includes, though partially transcending, the other old attempts at interpretation such as ‘the Messiah,’ or ‘the Logos.’ It also corresponds to His own term for Himself, ‘the Son of Man,’ in so far as the one regards the relation from the divine side—from Christ’s point of view; the other from the human—that of the Christian. •

And this is not merely the earliest Christian estimate of His person. Later on, too, the whole process of dogmatic formulation, which constitutes the inner history of the first Christian centuries, seems quite clearly to have the same meaning.¹ In some sense at least this development must be taken to be the output of Christianity as it came to full self-consciousness. In it we see the mind of the Church gradually edging towards a satisfactory understand-

¹ For a simple and short account of these controversies and their significance, see W. Temple’s article on ‘The Divinity of Christ,’ part ii., in *Foundations*.

ing of what was implied in Christian devotion. This was accomplished by a steady process of elimination and selection among more or less adequate statements of it. The result of this stands as the expression, mainly in terms of Greek thought, of an underlying identity. The term which was so long the orthodox watchword, *ὁμοούσιος* = 'of one substance' (with the Father), was only the theological form of the belief already from the first fully present in 'the Son of God.'

This discrimination of the meaning that Christians must assign to Christ was carried through in the face of, and largely in answer to, tendencies of thought and practice which warred fiercely against it. It was no merely inevitable result of drifting, due to the absence of alternative terms or ways of regarding Him. At every step such substitutes were pressing in on the Christian and trying to establish their claim to be what he meant when he worshipped Christ. Even the New Testament is full of fiery protests against assigning any of the lesser values to its central figure. Of these St. Peter's Messianic confession is the first, and the repeated assertion in the Johannine epistles the last.¹ They are all directed against any levelling down of the disciples' claim for their Master to a possibly shareable altitude. And outside the New Testament

¹ Matt. xvi. 13-16, 'Thou art . . . the Son of the living God,' and e.g. 1 John v. 20, 'We know that the Son of God is come, . . . we are in . . . his son Jesus Christ.'

the same revulsion is shown in the conflict with Gnosticism, Arianism, and half the other heresies which only find their exaggerated antithesis in Marcionism and Sabellianism and the other half of the heresies which they provoked.¹ The strife between these ways of assigning too little or too much only reached its satisfaction in the maintenance of the Trinitarian faith by the Great Councils.

And outside the Christian Church—and themselves the causes of these aberrations within it—were all the host of contemporary ideas about the relations of God and man, popular as well as philosophical. These took various forms, from the belief in ‘Sons of God,’ such as that possibly implied in the centurion’s cry at the Cross, up to the formation of vast hierarchies of such ‘Emanations’ and ‘Æons’ as are found in the heathen Gnosis. And, further, the deification of a man such as Apollonius of Tyana shows how easy it was for men who revered a teacher, especially if his teaching were accompanied by miracles, to take *that* way of escape and worship him without claiming uniqueness or supremacy. Apotheosis was also accorded to all Emperors as a matter of course—even to Claudius. So there was plenty of room in Hadrian’s Pantheon for Christ if His worshippers would but accept a place for Him there. But they steadily refused—

¹ *Vide* W. Temple *loc. cit.*: also Kelly, *History of the Church of Christ*, vol. i.

refused to have Him exalted on any pedestal destined for One Who was divine but not God Himself.

The Trinity, therefore, was no lightly won, easily accepted formula; it was beaten out in the refusal of compromise which offered itself at every turn; in the teeth, as it must have seemed to its opponents, of monotheistic belief, and debarring, as its supporters contended, quite decisively any dualistic, polytheistic or pantheistic misunderstandings. Thus was the Christian attitude towards Christ defined. In modern terms one may perhaps say that at least it rejected emphatically both undifferentiated monism on the one side, and any pluralistic solution on the other.

This became clear while Christianity was winning itself recognition. It is still clearer when it has done so. For without a doubt the final conflict with paganism in the Roman Empire—represented for us by the reaction under Julian ‘the Apostate,’ in which Christianity stands against neo-Platonism allied with Mithraism—simply points the same moral. The opposition was a pantheistic philosophy putting forward a single champion from among its more or less divine men as the opponent of the Incarnate recognised by monotheistic Christianity. To this we have an interesting modern parallel in the case of the elevation of Confucius, the mortal sage, to the ‘level of heaven and earth,’ which was effected by Imperial edict in China as the Government’s strongest counterblast to the preaching of

Christianity in that country. In both these cases we find hero-worship discarded perforce, because it admitted of more than one claimant to devotion, and no personal Creator and Sustainer of the universe. What will be the issue in the Far East does not yet appear. On the Mediterranean, dying Paganism, through making a desperate attempt to consolidate all objects of worship into the 'Sol Invictus,' only succeeded in ensuring the triumph of One Who was never such a mere conflation or representative of divine beings. The final duel made their fall the more necessary and conspicuous. For that world which accepted Him, Christ, as perfect God and perfect Man, overcame all rivals, as Jehovah in the Old Testament is seen eliminating for Israel all the gods of the nations and finally vanquishing Baal. So the problem was solved for the first Christian centuries.

Present Difficulties

To-day we are again met by a similar, although far more complicated, situation—the great question is whether the issue will be the same. In the science, and still more in the practice, of comparative religion to-day, we find the Christian consciousness called to face exactly the same problem, but, on a larger scale. It is asked—will it, can it admit any equal to its Master? Can it possibly be honest and fix a gulf? Is Christ verily all that has been

claimed for Him, or is He one man—or one god for the matter of that—amongst many ?

Let us take one or two modern instances of this, first from practical life and then from books. When one talks to an Indian student, if he knows something about Christianity and also about his own religion, he says, ' Yes, Christ is God and Krishna is God ; the one for you, the other for us.' In theological terms, he holds that an ' economy ' of revelation has been effected—God has shown Himself in different ways to different nations. Exactly the same underlying view recurs if one meets Abdul Ulla (Abbas Effendi), the present head of the Behais. He says he believes Christ to be God, but he believes himself, or at least his father, to be so too.¹ This constitutes the practical aspect of the problem. For such is not the earliest, or indeed any, Christian view, nor could it be the faith of a missionary religion. There is no point in giving if what is of equal value is already possessed. Such a view is rather the expression of a religious attitude which believes in a special Providence but not in a general one, and therefore advances no universal claim for any particular divine incarnation.

The study of Comparative Religion is only raising in a more or less systematic form the same question. The classification of the beliefs of men and their

¹ See Appendix to *Report, Commission, IV.*, Edinburgh World-Missionary Conference, the statement of present-day Behai belief with regard to Abbas and Beha.

similarities seems (though indeed illogically) to suggest that they are all about equally true—that is, either that all are different but almost equally valuable ways of approaching one Reality, or else that all are equally illusions. The latter is the view advanced in Professor S. Reinach's *Orpheus*, which gives a most compendious survey of religious beliefs, though in detail inaccurate, and in general spirit probably even more unreliable. He arrives at, or rather starts with, the conclusion that all religions are superstition—‘the sum of scruples which impede free action.’ More gentle and thoughtful books on the same line, such as Mr. E. Holmes's too sympathetic *Creed of Buddha* and *Creed of Christ*, suggest rather that all, if taken rightly, are in their higher forms¹ one and the same.

Ultimately the latter view, with which the Hindu and Behai would agree, is from the religious standpoint the only one which will need desperately serious consideration. Religion's fight with irreligion, though always an element in its growth and life, can never be its ultimate conflict. Religion can really only be matched with religion. At least, if religion is an ineradicable need of the human heart, this must be so. And if it is not, it is impossible to explain its universal existence. If one may so put it, the Armageddon of man's spirit will always be

¹ What is the criterion of height? If there is no perfect form, how can one shape of religion approach it more closely than another? Or at least, how can it be known to do so? See p. 17.

rather against the 'false prophet', than the 'old dragon'; with Lucifer the fallen angel rather than with any form of the self-expression of the flesh.

Here, then, the last enemy is in view. This is a non-Christian form of *religious* belief. It seems likely to take the shape of some sort of Pantheistic Unitarianism, based on the notion of a spiritual background to the world. This is viewed as throwing up from time to time more or less 'express images' of itself—men in whom the universal spirit takes form and flesh. Thus there is constituted a creed of progressive incarnations such as never reach complete and final form, but are thought always to provide high spiritual possibilities for man. The divine life is for it an atmosphere into which men may rise by letting it, so to speak, soak through them.

Now whatever else this is, it is *not* historical Christianity. The Christian centralisation of all things on the figure of Jesus of Nazareth can never admit such merely spasmodic and sporadic emergence of the divine; God cannot for it be incarnate equally anywhere. No: the worshipper of Christ is bound to maintain somehow that there is here in some sense a unique Sonship of the Father. For the Christian at least, religion has become a matter of signalling a certain epiphany as uniquely real; of saying that a certain son is *the* Son to Whom all the other sons must come; that 'God Who at sundry times in divers manners spake in times past to the fathers, hath

spoken to us through His Son, Whom He hath made heir of all things.'

What I take this to mean in modern terms is that the Christian, if he is to maintain his faith, must find in Christ such a personal revelation of God as to be sufficient for all men and all times. This manifestation of God's character and action will need to be so *naturally* expressive—if I may put it so—of Him, as not only to include all that is supposed to be of value in other incarnations, but also to transcend and supplant them. Whatever in them is good and true must be found perfect in Christ, and, further, what in them is largely aspiration and ideal, a hope rather than its fulfilment, dreams with little reality, must be in Him solid fact of history.

Such then is the meaning of the question which above all others has importance for Christians to-day. We are bound to ask and at least attempt to answer it. Let us sum it up here. Is Christ unique in the sense in which Christians have always believed Him to be so? Is He God in the sense of the creeds? Into whatever terms we may translate them, they mean at least that *all* others are far less than He. Is faith in Him as *the* Incarnate justifiable? This is the problem I wish to discuss and leave to answer itself in the reader's mind.

Subject of Study

The consideration of this question will of course be largely a matter of comparison between the

Christian belief and its chief rivals. From this we can eliminate, I think, for our purposes all forms of faith in Incarnation except those which possess a monotheistic or at least monistic background. Such claims, for instance, as those of Apollonius of Tyana or Alexander of Abonoteichos in the Greco-Roman world, may fairly be considered as discounted by the polytheistic atmosphere in which they arose. The religion of the world can never again be anything but monotheistic. The monistic postulates of science alone would make it certain that pluralism is ruled out. This implies also that all hero-worship, etc., which has an animistic nidus may be also ignored: for instance, the touching faith of frontier tribes in

ikal Seyn (John Nicholson) does not even demand examination in this connection. Animism as a religious force, in spite of the efforts of modern theosophy and spiritualism to rehabilitate it, can never fight the final battle with monotheism.

There remain, I think, three lines of non-Christian development which must be examined.

1 Firstly, there are those we may call the religions of the Enlightener; that is, where the Saviour is conceived mainly as a Bringer of Light, a Day-star—a teacher of true ideas. Of these I shall say a good deal on Buddhism as the most typical, and something on some forms of such religious tendencies in Hellenism.

Secondly, there is a vast field of Indian religion which is covered by the general term *bhakti* (devo-

tion). With this I shall deal only so far as it is directed towards Vishnu conceived as incarnate (Vaishnava Bhakti).

And thirdly, there is the line of unorthodox Mohammedan belief which is called the Shiah, and runs almost from the beginning with the worship of Ali down to its latest development in the rise of modern Babism or Behaism (which I shall refer to under the compendious term Babi-Behai).

In estimating the other claimants to equality with Christ, I shall necessarily include for consideration not only the founders of their religions, but the whole working out of their spirit in them, so far as it can be judged to be in line with their own essential life or bears on their own position in the belief. In the case of Christianity, the Christian doctrine has always been that the Incarnation was extended and completed in the Church.¹ Buddhism has a similar doctrine of the community (the *Sangha*) as part of its essential contents as a religion.² And Babism makes the same demand for its *beit-ul-'adl*, or Household of the Righteous.³

In this way it will be my object to try in each case to get as complete a summation as possible of the

¹ One may take the definition of that for our purposes to be all bodies of Christians which seem to have any legitimate claim to march with the 'classical' period, as it may be called, with that normative apprehension of God in Christ which is marked for us by the New Testament.

² See *Transactions of International Congress for the History of Religion*, Oxford, 1908, vol. i. p. 391 ff.

³ Römer, *Die Bâbi-Behai*, p. 388 ff.

inner characteristics, the essential life-principles, of each religion as it is related to the Incarnate in whom it believes. And I shall then make some attempt by comparison to estimate how far the claim of Christianity to embody the Divine life uniquely can be justified in the light of experience combined with the best moral and spiritual insight of our day. Our first task, however, will be to examine these other faiths in some detail.

Method of Study

But, as a preliminary, a few words must be said here about the general *method* of this inquiry, which is mainly that known as the comparative study of religion. It will be first of all *historical*; that is, I shall attempt, apart from all presuppositions, to ascertain as nearly as possible what are the facts about the particular religions as they evolved, to see in what, if any, relation they stand to previous beliefs, and to trace the strains of devotion which they share with others. Especially I shall devote a particular section to the inquiry whether they had any contact with the Christian line of development (Semitic, Hebrew, Catholic), either before or after Christ. I shall then try to estimate what are the most characteristic features of each as compared with other, especially with Christian, beliefs, and to say what seem, in the light of their actual experience, to have been their main sources of strength and weakness. Throughout this historical treatment I want to

ask how far it is possible to trace definite lines of development and especially what may be called a main line.

This inquiry into historical facts is the necessary foundation of any understanding in this sphere, since the nature of religious development, like that of all human, and especially of all social, things, cannot be predicted on general principles. Such evolution will not very often, as far as we can see, fall in with any preconceived scheme, but must be accepted as it is, apart from what we think it might have been or ought to have been. This unexpectedness of the historical • perhaps arises from the fact that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. In any case we cannot see to the bottom of the facts or understand all the reasons for them; they are not 'pellucid.'¹ But if we wish to be in touch with reality in this sphere we must be prepared to sit at the feet of the historians.

Secondly, the method on which I want to proceed will involve an attempt to deal with the *psychological* facts of the religions even more than with their outer history. In all such study *Religion* is the indubitable fact. Primarily, neither God nor His working are more than interpretations. This will come out by comparing it with any æsthetic inquiry. Whereas in our treatment of art, for instance, the

¹ See remarks on this 'opaqueness' of historical facts 62 of *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, by C. C. J. Webb, a teacher to whom I owe much which I have used ill.

existence of beauty is our starting-point,¹ in the attempt to inquire into any religion the fact which we have before us, in the first place, is rather the experience of the worshipper than the object of which he is conscious in it. Hence in the case before us it is Christian devotion to the Incarnate which is to be compared with similar forms of religious attitude primarily rather than the fact of Christ with other supposed incarnations. But this does not exclude from the study of religion some treatment of the objective fact, since this appears in a subjective shape as forming the *content* of the worshipper's experience.

This 'psychological' method will liberate us from much tiresome and almost interminable inquiry. For instance, if we attempt first to get at the specific characteristics of the Christian's apprehension of his Lord and of that Lord as He is apprehended, rather than immediately at the Figure of the Lord Himself, it will be possible to assume as our basis the picture as included in the New Testament, especially the Fourth Gospel. This would not be legitimate if it were a question as to external fact. The same holds good equally of the treatment of other religions, where also outer history will only come in so far as it affects belief. But further, this method has the additional advantage that it assists us in getting at the core of a religion, which after

¹ I do not inquire whether it should be so or not. *Vide Webb*,
n. 32

all is a matter of the conscious spirit primarily, and of material facts only after and through experience.

The third characteristic of my method is perhaps more difficult to explain. It may be called *normative*. That is, my continual object will be, if possible, to disengage from the facts of this religious experience in its different forms, when compared with each other, the various strong or weak points which they embody. By relating these to each other, I shall make an effort to let them range themselves in order of value, and so to obtain some standard for, at least, relative judgments. Whether even this criterion can be found experiment alone can show; but if it can, its importance is obvious.

For religion is ultimately a question of setting special value on certain manifestations of the spirit, human and divine. If the souls of the murderer and the saint, of the prophet and the sensualist, are all on the same level, then religion is and can be only a name. Ultimately such 'Value-Judgments' ¹ (saying that this or that is good, or God) can only be substantiated by an appeal to experience. We can only ask, Is this or that found to be so? Such a court of appeal is, of course, subjective. But any one who believes in the validity of the human reason and its judgments at all must hold that it is possible at least to approximate to agreement on such ques-

¹ The use of this term, invented by Otto Ritschl, does not imply any sympathy with the views of his uncle, to the exposition of which he applied it.

tions of valuation. If we distrust the instrument here, there is no reason why we should trust it at all—even to the extent of letting it make us distrust itself. Our only choice is to believe that on the whole we can arrive at reality in this sphere.

But if so it ought to be possible, by a comparison of the trend in the higher spirits of each religion, to ascertain what form and object of worship most nearly approaches the goal at which they aim. Those things on which the men, who have had the widest experience and the best opportunities of judging, lay the greatest emphasis, will be most valuable. And for this purpose the human race, as it develops in religion, may be treated as a single judge whose verdict we wish to hear. If this canvassing of opinion be accomplished, it will be also possible to say *at least* in what sense and how far any single expression of the ideal can be or is unique. Such 'standardisation' of religious values should produce at least a notion, if not a clear vision, of what the supreme must be.

With these three marks of general method in our mind, let us turn to the study of our problem in detail.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

Evidence

As regards the *evidence* for their history and doctrine, the Buddha and Buddhism offer probably a far more difficult problem than any other religious founder or movement—certainly more so than Christ and Christianity. Like its fellow-countryman the Ganges, Buddhism rises behind mountains almost impenetrable to us. Its watershed and early tributaries, as well as its source, are all but unknown by direct access, and can only be guessed from the nature of the sediment found in solution or deposited farther down the stream. Even its later course passes through deep cañons in which it disappears for long stretches, and can only be traced by inference and with probability. There are, however, some certain indications, and I shall attempt to confine myself to what they show.

The main layers of evidence are the following :—

1. *The Buddhist Scriptures*, which are of prime importance, although it is to be remembered that before any texts were written down at all there came a period of at least two hundred and fifty years of

purely oral tradition, in which, as usual, alterations and additions probably occurred to an even greater extent than in the books which took its place. These are :

(a) The great early texts constituting the Tri Pitaka (or Tkree Baskets) which are in Pali (*i.e.* 'text' language), once probably the dialect of Magadha, a kingdom where the Buddha preached. The second division of this, the Sutta Pitaka (or Sermon Basket), gives most of the main doctrine. All this canon in its unexpanded form has been preserved in Ceylon.

(b) The later texts and commentaries written originally in Sanskrit, the old religious language of India (which bears much the same relation to Pali as Hebrew to Aramaic in the Jewish-Christian development). Many of these are now only extant in translations, especially Chinese. They embody a great deal of the material that appears in the Pali, but add to, and even alter, it. The line B.C.—A.D. practically divides these two strata.

The selection among these traditional compositions to form the canon, or authorised scriptures, was not accomplished until almost our own era in the case of the Pali, and two hundred years later in that of the Sanskrit—that is, about five hundred and seven hundred years from the death of the Founder. The dating of the various parts of this Buddhist Bible is very doubtful, the only general certainty being that Pali is earlier than Sanskrit. Its contents

are, however, the main evidence we possess for what was at different times taught as Buddhism, but the whole is obviously a growing stream, and the exact distance from the source and the exact origin of what it contains is usually very doubtful.

2. We have, however, some means of testing this by *External Evidence*. At different points of the stream we possess samples of its water, so to speak, drawn off and bottled here and there down its course.

We have (a) the fragmentary and, as far as it goes, negative evidence of the Greek Megasthenes, who was ambassador at the court of Sandrakottos (Chandragupta) about 300 B.C.:

Also (b) the inscriptions, some thirty in all, of the first great Buddhist king, Ashoka, about 250 B.C., and some other inscriptions from his time and on:

And lastly (c) the very full accounts of Indian Buddhism in their time by the Chinese pilgrims Fa Hsien, Sung Yun, and Yuan Chwang, in 400, 500, and 650 or so A.D. respectively.

Such cross sections at different points are independent of the main line of Buddhist tradition, and give us to some extent means of testing what was contained in it at different levels.

These, along with the texts which we have mentioned, are practically all the materials we possess for reconstructing the earlier history of Buddhism. For later times the different Buddhist countries offer a richer but unreliable supply. What follows will be

mainly confined to the earlier evidence, with some supplementation, as the history proceeds, from later and contemporary accounts.

The Outer History of Buddhism

The Founder, whose personal name was Siddharta, was the son of a prince or chieftain of the Sakhya clan called Shuddhodana, near whose capital, Kapilavastu, on the southern edge of what is to-day Nepal, the future Buddha was born in the middle of the sixth century B.C. After marriage and the birth of a son, he left his city to seek salvation, first by the usual methods of contemporary asceticism, but in vain, and then successfully by a new way of his own.

After the discovery of his secret, Siddharta is known by the family surname Gautama, or as 'Sakhya-muni'=the Seer of the Sakhyas, or by titles of honour, such as 'the Buddha'=the Enlightened One, or 'Tathagata'=the Perfect One, just as the Founder of Christianity, Jesus, is known first as 'Son of Joseph' or the 'Prophet of Nazareth,' and then by His titles 'the Christ'=the Anointed One, or 'the Lord.' In contrast with Jesus, however, it is significant that the Buddha loses his personal name from the time of his enlightenment. Henceforward he was preaching his saving doctrine year in and year out—settled in some town or village in the rainy seasons, and wandering during the dry months up and down the kingdom of Magadha—from the age of thirty-six till his death

at eighty, which occurred from old age and indigestion about 480 B.C.

After his decease, his disciples propagated his teaching in oral form with unobtrusive but growing success, until a great empire over North India and Afghanistan had been called into existence, probably in opposition to Alexander the Great and his successors, by one Chandragupta, known to the Greeks as Sandrakottos. It is at his court that we find Megasthenes the Greek ambassador, who in 300 B.C., nearly two centuries after the Buddha's death, while giving an account of the Brahmanists, failed (as far as we know) to notice Buddhism at all: Unlike Christianity, which even for an outsider¹ refused to seem a Jewish sect for even one-fifth of this time, Buddhism under Chandragupta appeared so little to conflict with its surroundings as to be indistinguishable from the current Brahmanism supported by this emperor and his son.

Their successor, however, the great Ashoka, whose inscriptions we can still see, proved himself the Constantine of this new religion. His missionary zeal, both within and without his kingdom, resulted in vigorous internal and external developments. His son, Mahinda, whom he despatched for the purpose, introduced Buddhism into Ceylon, and he sent emissaries both east and west to Bactria, Kashmir, and even, as he claims, into the kingdoms of Syria and Egypt. He seems to have pressed on the reduc-

¹ Pliny's letters to Trajan.

tion of the sacred teachings to writing, and at his capital, Patiala (Patna), held a council for the elimination of heresies (250 ? B.C.).

Almost immediately after Ashoka's death, however, his empire fell to pieces, although the Greco-Bactrian state which had arisen on its north-western frontier exercised a more or less effective supremacy over the warring rivalries of the fragments. To its greatest ruler, the Greek king Menander, known to the Indians as Milinda, and flourishing about 150 B.C., a famous Buddhist treatise is dedicated. During this period Buddhism continued to grow outwards and to absorb new elements into itself.

This double process of internal and external development was carried further in the course of the next two centuries, during which a rising tide of Mongol invaders pressed in from the north and, after struggles with the Greco-Bactrian dynasties and with the kinglets of Northern India, finally established an 'Indo-Scythian' (i.e. Aryan-Mongol) Empire over them all. The great representative of this is King Kanishka, who flourished about 50 A.D.

Although Buddhism continued to be the great religion of his empire—indeed, on the request of China he sent out missionaries to that country—yet it underwent, or rather consummated, internal changes which finally split it into two streams. It was now that Sanskrit, the Hebrew of India, took the place of Pali as the Buddhist sacred language—

a clear sign that such a new development has begun to reach quite definite form and power. The great teacher Ashvagosha, the Second Founder of Buddhism (one of whose works we have in a Chinese translation), gave full expression to this new form of it during Kanishka's reign, and the Council of Jalandara about 70 A.D. made the classical demarcation between the older and newer Buddhism.

Of the contents and meaning of both something will be said later. The one known as the 'Hinayana' = the 'Little Vehicle,' or more properly as the 'Theravada' or 'School of the Elders,' is recognised as representing 'Apostolic' Buddhism, so to speak, even by its opponents, the adherents of the Mahayana (or Great Vehicle), which they claim as its legitimate outcome—just as Catholic Christianity claims spiritual continuity with its Jewish origins. These two forms became later known as the southern and northern Buddhism respectively, since the Hinayana continued unbroken in Ceylon and was recovered in a modified form by a reformation in Burma and Siam, while the Mahayana proved the most successful founder of mission churches in China, Tibet, Mongolia, Corea and Japan. For the time, however, the parent tree and its luxuriant offshoot continued to grow side by side, although the sap seems to have been mainly drawn off into the new branch.

Meanwhile in India a consolidation of the old Brahmanism must have been slowly taking place—

partly, no doubt, owing to the inner cleavage within the paramount Buddhism and partly to the gradual purification which must have been effected in thought and practice by opposition and assimilation to Buddhist ideas. Yet for some centuries the inscriptions hardly mention Brahmanist offerings, and the Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hsien in 400 A.D. and Sung Yun in 518 A.D., still show Buddhism as the great religion of India. It was certainly still missionary, since it was not until the fifth century that under the influence of Buddhaghosa Burma was evangelised, and not till the sixth century that Tibet was veneered with Mahayanist doctrine. But in 526 A.D. we find the 28th Patriarch in the direct succession from the Buddha transferring his seat to China—a clear sign that opposition in India is becoming oppressively strong, and that the centre of gravity in Buddhism has shifted for good. The development of the new type of religion, already initiated in the Indian Mahayanism, now makes greater strides away from its native home, and assumes its most distinctive forms after this period in the daughter churches abroad.

In India from this time on the increasing pressure of renovated Brahmanism drives both types of Buddhism more and more to the wall. This external assault corresponded to that incipient corruption of Buddhism within itself after centuries of political patronage which is attested in the account of it by the last Chinese pilgrim (Yuan Chwang) in

the first half of the seventh century. But the main factors in the result must be held to be the respective survival-values of the two religions. Buddhism with its passivity and individualism was at a great disadvantage when faced by Brahmanism with its intensely social religion and strong caste system. In any case, after a long decline, from the eighth to the eleventh century A.D., during which the rise of Islam further strengthened the hands of the Brahmanists, Buddhism finally went down (though probably in argument rather than in blood) before its opponents, and the land of its birth knew it no more. In the northern countries it continued to develop while it was decaying in its original home; but this same time—the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries—also marks the close of its evolution abroad, and with it of the inner and outer growth of Buddhism. It has remained since then more or less stable in extent and belief until contact with Christian missions and European knowledge in our own times galvanised it to new activity.

The Inner History of Buddhism

Siddharta Gautama, who became the Buddha, was a high-caste Indian noble from the northern plains, and his spirit too drew from that soil much that it made its own. The atmosphere of Indo-Aryan thought conditions the whole growth of early Buddhism, however uncongenial it may seem to it. That thought had not yet reached its full richness

and distinctive colouring in the later Vedantas, but the main lines of its pantheistic theory of existence were already well laid down in the older Upanishads, and its practical accompaniments in meditation, asceticism, ceremonial, and, above all, the caste system, had long been fully worked out from the more recent philosophic texts.

Behind these lesser scriptures lay the ancient majesty of the Vedas, like their own Himalayas rising dim beyond the foothills and the plain—simple, massive, and lofty, but remote and rather cold. Even in them the fresh faith in many nature-gods was seen already verging towards a rather impersonal theism. The Vedas had been sufficient for the bracing uplands of their original home, but the settlers in the teeming plains found themselves better at ease with the more definitely pantheistic tendencies of the later philosophy and practice. It was in relation to these that Gautama developed his own experience and principles.

As Prince Siddharta he had been driven from his family and palace by disgust—that profound aversion from the dreariness of existence which is characteristic of Indian thought at its deepest. This, which—under whatever form of restlessness or despair—plays its part in the conversion of any human soul, was overmastering for him. According to tradition, it was made effective by the successive sights of an old hag, a sick man and a corpse, followed by that of a holy man who had turned his back upon

a world where such miseries haunt life. Gautama, as he now becomes, snatched at the example. Unlike St. Francis in his similar conversion-experience, he felt no desire to kiss and comfort,¹ but determined to seek refuge from the meshes of old age, disease, and death in the other- (or inner-) worldly aspirations and exercises of contemporary asceticism. He withdrew from the world of men and spent seven years in strenuous self-mortification, but only found relief when he finally threw that life over, and, whilst remaining a seeker without home, took to a non-ascetic life. Now at last he received his revelation of saving truth, and under the branches of the sacred Bodhi Banyan (Tree of Knowledge) he became finally and completely 'the Buddha'—the Enlightened One.

According to his later preaching, the insight that came to him was threefold : *

- (1) Existence is sorrow.
- (2) The cause of sorrow is 'thirst' (i.e. desire).
- (3) The cure of sorrow is the destruction of thirst.

What he understood by these theses has been greatly debated, but the evidence all seems to tend towards interpreting them literally.

(1) Existence is sorrow because unsatisfying and transitory; for no real or permanent joy is possible in it, it offers no hope of solid happiness or rest. This misery of existence was for Gautama and his contem-

¹ St. Francis and the Leper (Fioretti).

poraries extended to the farthest margin of the infinite by the accepted belief in the doctrine of reincarnation, itself a relic of the animistic outlook. It is to be noticed, however, that Gautama did not believe that the souls of men migrated into animals or plants, but only into the bodies of other men. But this implies that existence is endless and eternally renewed in sorrow. This certainty, which in the West has been felt only to be fought or forgotten, was made a poignant bitterness for the men of that time and country by the reflective sensitiveness and far-sighted pessimism which are characteristic of the Indian temperament. They refused in true religious fashion to be satisfied with the pleasures of the day or the easy promise of a morrow, but did not possess sufficient energy or resilience to remedy or ignore the evil.

(2) For them, and the Buddha among them, the root and core of this misery is *subjective—desire* for something else. The 'thirst' for particular satisfactions, and even the 'will to live' itself, are simply causes of suffering which renew it from day to day and life to life. It seems manifest that even the highest appetites find no rest in the ever-flowing tide of things.

There can be no doubt that here the Buddha had found truth common to all religions of redemption. There is that within man which refuses to be satisfied with the partial and the passing. But in his analysis of the case, he introduced a thought to us very foreign

and difficult to grasp. 'There is no self,' he said—i.e. no soul, no one permanent entity to be conscious of longing. The conditions and components of desire are all that exists—there is really no 'I' that feels want but only a want felt. This can, I think, only be explained by opposition to the contemporary doctrine that the real 'I' in every one is the universal 'I.' This meant the god of Pantheism ('the Atman is the Brahman'), and, as the Buddha was not concerned with knowledge but with feeling, not with explanation but with cure, he could deny that there was any such substratum, any reality except the consciousness of desire. For him earthly existence was sorrow in its essence, so that susceptibility to this was equivalent to existing, and there was nothing further—at least nothing which mattered.

(3) The solution he taught is to cut the desire at the root. It cannot be slaked, this thirst—therefore it must be destroyed. If man will give it up, he may be delivered from the whirlpool of existence, taken off the wheel of rebirth, since, as he is nothing except desire and its ingredients, there will then remain nothing to be reborn.¹ The 'fetters' will then be snapped and Karma, the chain of action and reaction, the law of the coexistence of appetites, the convener of the congeries of constituent desires, will be dissolved.

¹ We may perhaps render this intelligible by interpreting 'since man is conscious of nothing except his own reaction to stimulus, if he ceases to react he will cease to be conscious.'

Here again any spiritual man can feel much truth. The negation of the self-centred will is the first necessity of peace; but what most men will doubt is whether that will can be killed outright and not merely scotched—or rather shifted in direction, turned outwards from inwards, or at the best given a new centre—and whether the conscious attempt to suppress it by its own unaided effort will not intensify the evil. The fact that the early devotees of Buddhism did find peace in this way shows, however mysteriously, the supreme truth of the gain in losing the life; but of this there is more to be said later.

Even when this triple revelation was completed and the Buddha knew himself freed, there remained a last trial—the temptation under the Bo-tree. Should he, in whom desire was no longer, take the ‘Not-being’ he had won? Could he not as ‘Bodhisattva’¹ enter Nirvana? Should he, now fully qualified as he was, be a ‘Buddha for Himself’ and cease to exist, or should the Enlightened be the Enlightener too? Was he to turn back to the world of men and bring the saving illumination to other seekers? They would almost certainly refuse it. Yet there might be some who would accept it, and ought he to refuse to give them the chance? No: to deny it them would be to bind himself still with the fetters of desire—the desire for non-existence. So he must break with this last selfishness as well.

¹ Destined to be a Buddha.

Yes: he would, he *must*, preach the light—the cause of that sorrow, which is existence, and its cure, the uprooting of desire.

It was for this elimination of desire that the Buddha evolved his discipline of the Noble Eightfold Path — his moral and spiritual gymnastic. This teaching was only a means to release. Its practice of uprightness and kindness was to avert the will from individual desires and their consequences (or rather ~~resurrections~~) in an endless series of rebirths. His ethics are not based like those of his Brahmanist contemporaries on the insight that all men and things are one, and that in loving another a man loves himself—still less like the Ethics of Christianity on any belief in the value of love for its own sake. They rest only on the desire to be rid of the misery of self entailed and reiterated in the self-affirmation of self-assertion. The root-motive here is aversion—a negative movement of the will, since complete *cessation* of desire, not the alteration of objective, is its end. In addition to the various forms of self-seeking, his doctrine rejected all the mortification of the ascetics along with the ceremonial of the priests, and especially the pride of the caste system, since none of them could be anything but the expression of desire. We see this universal negative most clearly in the form of life he inculcated. The monkhood of true Buddhism arose not from a desire for positive purity but for that freedom of the 'religious' life from care which was otherwise im-

possible, since no layman could avoid all interest in anything.

It is a psychological as well as a logical puzzle how from such a principle there could follow any such great alteration of life as was certainly accomplished in the first days of its preaching. A gospel which would not allow man even to be homesick seems hardly human; but in the dawn of Buddhism it did bring men 'to the haven where they would be.' And yet the Buddha certainly taught that longing even for Nirvana is a binding on the wheel. Not-being must come automatically by the cessation of all desire even for Net-being. So he taught: 'If this can be avoided, existence too will cease, or rather will have ceased.' We may retranslate perhaps by remembering that the only sense of existence with which the Buddha was concerned was as consciousness of pain—arising from frustrated desire. Wherever he looked for existence, he 'stumbled upon' suffering; and if the cause of this in desire were removed, (the evil of) being, he held, would be gone.

His teaching is one of release, and he ignored all outside the direct path to it, the way to nothingness. He did not deny that there was anything else; but he did not care to inquire or teach about it, being rather a Gallio than a Sadducee, except as regards this one thing needful. Obviously such an attitude leaves a vast number of questions unsettled. Especially did it omit to face the beliefs of men in the Divine. For the Buddha, the question of gods

lacked actuality. His denial of the individual soul carried with it, of course, the denial of a universal spirit, such as was postulated by those whose beliefs he had shared before his conversion. But within that ultimate negation he was not concerned if people did believe in the existence of divine beings. In this concession he probably draws on the atheistic, though not anti-animistic, system of the Samkhya philosophy. Such a toleration of divine beings would make the process of conversion easier, and such gods would only be inoperative Supermen, all within the realm of sorrow and becoming 'as all tracks are contained in the track of the elephant.' Indeed, even in much later Buddhist teaching all the gods are subordinate to the Buddha—e.g. we find it said that Brahma bows down before him and acknowledges his eternal wisdom as superior.

But the attitude towards the person of Gautama himself among the early believers was not one of worship. He stood to them rather as supreme prophet than as divinity. During his lifetime they honoured 'the Enlightened One' with the deepest reverence of the taught for the teacher, of followers for the pathfinder. But he was not adored even with that worship which some of them still offered to gods—beings superior and to be envied (if envy were not a form of desire) but not helpful. The Buddha was not as one of them. He was human but helpful, although he had nothing to give men but the Light he had already shed around, and so

could never himself bring them where they would be, and was not himself other than they could be. Such was their thought of him even in his lifetime.

This attitude was intensified after his death, since, as he was considered to have entered Nirvana, a reciprocal relation could no longer exist between him and his followers. Men might, and should, still reverence him (and we hear much of the good effects of such reverence on the believer), but *he* could not be expected to take any notice of them since he had ceased from active existence at least. Here the gods Brahma, Indra, etc., who were still on the wheel of rebirth, were more approachable, if not more effective. So the Buddha was not worshipped. The old Buddhist formula of 'adherence, 'I take refuge in the Buddha,' was rather a profession of orthodoxy, of adherence to his principles, than of devotion to his person, as is made clear by its other clauses, 'I take refuge in the Law and the Order,' the true teaching and its repository respectively. At Ashoka's council (Patna, c. 250 B.C.) the questions debated about the person of the Buddha reflect this primitive position: they are purely with regard to his earthly appearance—was it real? was he a man? etc. He is still 'Master,' but not yet 'Lord.'

But another element was already entering into the disciples' ideas of him, even if it was not a strain which had always been present though subordinate in their thoughts, and the method of conceiving his personality, at least with regard to its past, was pro-

foundly affected by it. We find on a 'stupa' restored by Ashoka (and so presumably already venerable in his time) an inscription which shows that it was erected to Konagamana, the last Buddha but one. This implies that dogmatic speculation had already been active setting out a line of Enlighteners for previous eras before Gautama. Other archaeological discoveries besides suggest that round these monuments, which seem to have been also relic-shrines, piety was even now busied with a commemoration which must have at least approximated to worship, and almost inevitably suggested the thought of conscious survival. With this probably went too the growth of beliefs, if not yet of stories, as to the Buddha's previous lives as 'Bodhisattva,' or candidate for full enlightenment. All this speculation was not specifically Buddhist, since it drew on Hindu sources other than the Master's teaching, and, as valueless for the immediate business of release, it was quite alien to Gautama's own thought.

The in-thrust of foreign peoples and ideas (Bactrian and Mongol, possibly even Christian, or at least Judaic) during the century each side of the beginning of our era, brought to the Buddhist world a great strengthening of the drift towards some sort of ultimate theism. This development seems to have gone on gradually by assimilation, until in the *True Lotus*, a book of the time of Kanishka (c. 70 A.D.), we find the Mahayana doctrine standing for a Buddha who can hardly be distinguished from the Avatars or

Incarnations of the Highest, which we find in Brahmanism; and, indeed, it was as the eighth great Avatar of the ordinary catalogue that he was actually absorbed into the Hindu Pantheon when his Way fell. Nirvana also has so far altered its character as to allow the Buddha (or at least his Bodhisattva form) although he is now in that state, to be conscious and gracious to his worshippers.

With this development all that is distinctive of original Buddhist belief seems to have disappeared, and the result could best be viewed, perhaps, in India as an early example of that 'Bhakti,' or personal devotion to an incarnate saviour, of which we shall study other forms later. It is, however, not merely an Indian religion but universal in its appeal, and it is still differentiated by the fact that 'the Buddha' had been an historical figure unlike the other avatars. Also his primary claim to worship and his special offer to the believer is still the enlightenment that he gives, rather than any union with himself, since salvation through following his teaching is even now usually the highest aspiration and prayer of the worshipper.

But already the Catholic Buddhism of the Mahayanists, if we may so call it, was ceasing to hold the historic Gautama at the centre-point of faith. Quite early (from the first century B.C. at least), in addition to the beliefs as to past Buddhas which we have noticed, there was developing what one may call without misnomer a 'Messianic'

belief in Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, of whom Sakhyā-muni was but the harbinger. He, as the expected initiator of a reign of kindness, became early an object of longing hope. And behind and above him again there began to emerge other figures greater than he, such as Amida, or Amitabha, the first Buddha, who should also be the last, the great merciful Prince of Peace.

It is now for 'times of refreshing' which Amida should bring—such as were only faintly adumbrated at Gautama's coming—that Buddhists in China and Japan still look, and it is such a Buddha who is meanwhile the hope and refuge of all that trust in him. How far this evolution depended on the early preaching of Jewish or Christian sects we shall have to inquire later, but it is without doubt very far from being distinctive of Buddhist beliefs, though equally without doubt the most living element in them to-day. It seems at least to show the bankruptcy of pure Buddhism and the inevitable trend of its religious feeling in a direction very alien from that in which it had originally started.

It is impossible here to give a full account of the very diversified condition of the religion as it exists to-day. But the later form of Buddhism, as it developed under the stress of human needs among the followers of the Mahayana in the north, possesses a certain common aspect, at least as compared with its original features which are still more or less preserved in the southern countries. It is impossible

to find any generally accepted statement of belief which would show this, but the points of difference, as far as they concern the place, person, and work of the Enlightener, may be summarised very roughly under three heads.

In the first place Buddhism has become a definitely theistic faith. The idea of an eternal and infinite God makes itself felt, although all moral attributes are relegated to the Buddhas, who are somehow regarded as emanations from, or at least subordinate to, the Supreme. This view sometimes shows itself in the form of hypostatizing Buddhahood, so to speak, in an ideal 'Adi-Buddha' or prototype, as a form of the eternal being. This God, as an ultimate background to the universe, is, of course, quite another thing from those divine beings the idea of whom Gautama had tolerated, but only as all within the iron ring of impersonal law.

Secondly, besides the supposed historical personages, differing in number and name but all Buddhas, (of whom we have referred to three of the chief, Konagamana, Gautama, and the anticipated Maitreya), there appear in the belief of the communities two other types of being closely connected with them. They indeed existed in the older belief, but have received greatly enhanced prominence and value in later times. One class, the so-called Heavenly Buddhas, are the divine archetypes of the earthly manifestations, and give to them a sort of permanent reality, even after the actual Buddhas

are conceived, as having entered Nirvana. The other, the Bodhisattvas, are beings on the high-road to Buddhahood, who refuse to enter Nirvana in order to be free to help men. These are thought of as potentially innumerable, eager and powerful to help, and separately existent even after obtaining embodiment in an actual Buddha. Thus we find Amitabha conceived as the heavenly Buddha whose active counterpart, Avalokitesvara, still hears prayer, although having appeared on earth and then entered Nirvana in the person of Gautama. This whole idea, again, is clearly quite alien even from the early notion of a succession of earthly Buddhas who, after previous lives as Bodhisattvas, reach final extinction in Nirvana. The invocation of Bodhisattvas and faith in them and the Heavenly Buddhas is conceived as effective to save, and forms the main part of the religion. Also the possibility of becoming a Bodhisattva, as an ideal for Buddhist piety, takes the place of the earlier aim at Arhatship. Thus now deification displaces sainthood as the highest attainment possible to supreme faith.

And thirdly, the belief in future lives, which we find, in the purely earthly form of transmigration, regarded by the earliest Buddhists as a continuance of the evil of existence in other human bodies, is now transformed for the ordinary Buddhist into hope or fear of a Paradise or Hell awaiting him after death, as the reward of his faith and works. It is to the heavenly state that he hopes to attain through his

relation to the Buddha. Here again the complete displacement of Nirvana, except as the destiny of Bodhisattvas, is quite contrary to the earliest preaching. Although we have to remember that all may be said potentially to be Bodhisattvas, yet in practice, like 'mystic union' in the West, this is only considered as practicable for a very few.

Such is Buddhism in its 'Northern' form to-day—a thing very different from the earliest, or even the present-day 'Southern,' shape of it and much more like Christianity. But in any case it is clear that these later forms of belief do stand for a definitely religious attitude,—far more so, in fact, than the original doctrine of atheistic salvation. Although Buddhism has ceased to be the religion of Gautama, it has become a faith in the Buddhas. This whole way of thought and practice in its very various shapes constitutes a sufficiently unified body of teaching and action, or rather a sufficiently uniform outlook on existence, to be regarded as a single religion to-day. Further, it possesses in its different renovations under Western influence, especially in Japan and Ceylon, an importance which justifies some further study. This must be left, however, to the close of the next chapter. It is sufficient here to repeat the fact that the personal faith of the Buddhist in the Buddhas is now the determining factor in his whole religion. What this implies we shall have to examine when we return to the present state of the religion.

CHAPTER III

BUDDHISM AS A RELIGION

It may seem from the account in the last chapter that Buddhism, at least in its original form, has little claim to be considered as a religion at all. But even from the beginning it acted as a religion, although not at first of the incarnational type, and it is important to see its early characteristics and the views of its Founder in order to be able to judge its later claim to compete with Christianity. So I shall try here to bring out the strong and weak points in it throughout its whole history, especially giving attention to the position of the Buddha and the Buddhas.

The distinctive note of the earliest Buddhism is *disgust*. This is its point of departure and the driving force which actuates it from start to finish. The pervading motive throughout is not attraction towards an ideal end but repulsion from something else—indeed from anything at all. The ground of this is ~~no~~ purely moral dissatisfaction with shortcomings. Still less is it rooted in a conviction that offence has been committed against holiness, whether personal or impersonal, while it is yet further from

resting on any sense that infinite love has been outraged by sin. No : desire has been frustrated, happiness is impossible in a world of flux, and despair sets in as the strongest passion of the soul. It is this negative reaction which lurks behind everything and turns the Buddhist to seek relief in the abolition of conscious existence altogether. His will is *not* to live.

This profound pessimism as to the value of life which lies at the heart of original Buddhism, has its counterpart in all religious experience. Indeed it finds its place as an element in our own spiritual tradition through such writings as Ecclesiastes. For the growth of what William James calls the 'twice-born' soul is always, and only, through a turning from the shallow expectations and satisfactions of the natural life to look for a higher mode of existence. The bitterness of this awakening is perhaps necessary to make man seek for bread instead of ashes, and it is often disappointment with the things of this world which leads him to demand and search for something other in kind and source. It is because there is for all religion a real and radical distinction between the attempted happiness of the mere animal and the blessedness of a spiritual being, that in the deepest sense man needs '*reculer pour mieux sauter*.' He has to go through the fire of purification before he can find peace.

But in the earliest Buddhism this fire is all-con-

suming. In the belief of the Buddha and his first followers, or at least in their formulation of it, *all* must go and give place to a mere blank. It seems as though the recoil were so powerful that no re-directed rebound was possible for those who had suffered it. They felt, indeed, most deeply that 'he who seeketh to find his life shall lose it,' but their conclusion, in words at least, was that 'he who loseth his life shall lose it.' So they held that the man who could abolish all desire to seek existence at all, would be rid of it and all the pain of it. The eternal day for them was the night in which all would be black, and not rather a true dawn quenching the garish light of this perishing world.

Such was their theory of salvation—a purely negative way. But there can be no doubt that for these earliest men and women it covered a very positive experience. They set out to destroy desire and, with it, existence and its misery, but they found a deep and joyful sense of release and security.¹ No doubt, psychologically, this resulted from the relaxation of strain produced by the surrender of their will to something other than themselves—'the Norm,' or law of their true being, as they conceived it—'Dharma.' This was for them a sort of impersonal equivalent to what in other religions has been presented as the Divine Will. So true is it that 'he

¹ See quotations from the early Buddhist 'Hymns of the Sisters,' etc., in Mrs. Rhys Davids's *Buddhism* (Home University Library).

who loseth his life shall save it'—whether he thinks so or not.

Whatever the explanation, it seems indubitable that the propagation of early Buddhism, like that of any other genuine religion, went forward not so much by argument as by imitation and suggestion, by contact with changed persons. World-weary souls turned to the light seen in those who had found peace through it, however much it was shut up within the dark lantern of a negative doctrine. 'Put out the light and then—put out the light,' the Buddhist preacher might say with Othello, but those who had eyes to see could tell that for him the night-light extinguished had given place to dawn. So they found salvation. But it is important to notice that, although this experience is a normal accompaniment of religious conversion,¹ it is not necessarily a religious phenomenon. In many cases of what is known as 'counter-conversion' (i.e. turning from the strain of a selfishly acute struggle for religious experience to a less artificial freedom in irreligion), exactly the same relief and rest has been a common resultant.² Moreover, such a conversion could only be accomplished in certain special cases, as becomes clear if we look at the people thus affected.

¹ See instances in Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion* (very common).

² For an admirable account of a typical (if fictitious) instance, see 'A Psychologist among the Saints,' L. P. Jacks, in *Among the Idolmakers*.

Early Buddhism assumes at its starting-point that the burden of life is heavy upon the soul and nothing but the rolling off of this weight constitutes salvation. It has nothing to say to those who are not sick with this nausea of existence as a whole. It is significant in this connection that Gautama and many of his early disciples came from circles which had all that life could give. They were princes or priests, rich landowners or merchants, men who had first tried all the good things and only then found them wanting. So, too, it owed its propagation and support again and again in the course of its early history to court favour. It was in such circles as these that satiety existed, and in them a feeling of ennui (or even crapula) urged men to rid themselves of the conditions from which it arose. It was only to such a special type of sick soul that the drastic remedy prescribed by the Buddha afforded relief. Here, as always, the experience of joy and peace in believing was relative to a particular state of mind which preceded it—just as *e.g.* security from malignant demons is the main attraction offered by Mohammedan monotheism to animistic tribes. The relief afforded to the patient only tests the value of the particular remedy confronted with the particular disease.

And Buddhism in its classical form was not a cure for all the ills that flesh is heir to. It had nothing to offer to those who suffer from the preventible evils of social life except to bid them cease striving and

longing for the good of which they were deprived. It had no great idea of a kingdom coming and to come, in which all things will be remoulded nearer to the heart's desire, in so far as its will is the Will of God. Its justice is based on antipathy for its opposite, not on any desire to manifest, however partially, the universal reign of love. Its charity is rather an alleviation of the horrors of existence than an instalment of a state where sorrow and sighing will flee away. So doles to mendicant monks are its typical form. For its benevolence is always without affection, and it does not care about helping but only about a willingness to help.¹ So also it offers no comfort to the mourners except to point out how common is their lot,² since its whole object is the escape of misery simply by the readjustment of personal desire.

And this marks a strange gap in the primitive Buddhists' thought and practice. Laying such stress on the subjective desire as the reason of sorrow, they failed to notice that it was essentially the clash between the inner and the outer world which formed the problem. The misery arising from it is the result of a contrast, and it is clear that to remedy it successfully a rectification is required not only within but outside—in the environment as well as the con-

¹ Cf. remarks by E. Bevan on the corresponding ideas in Stoicism, *Stoics and Sceptics*, pp. 66-71.

² Cf. the story of the mourning mother, whom the Buddha told that he would raise her son if she could procure some mustard-seed from a household where none had died.

sciousness. But, despairing of any such hopes as Christians have found in the aspiration towards the Kingdom of Heaven, on earth and beyond, the early Buddhist tried to cut the knot and rid himself of conscious existence altogether. No hope, purpose, or interest must be left at all.

It follows from this that only those could find full ease who turned their backs on all the ordinary desires and duties of social life. All who could not, or did not, take this course had nothing better to look for than the hope of being able to do so in a future life. Consequently monasticism was no accident or department but the very kernel of the Buddhist Church. It was the monk (or nun) alone who could cease from striving for existence—whose daily round of meditation and mendicancy furnished all they needed to ask. The yellow robe, the begging-bowl, and the beads became the natural symbol of salvation for Buddhism—the marks of a way apart from the common life of men.

And yet if the Buddha had carried through his own rejection of asceticism he would have arrived at a different conclusion. He had himself found all the efforts of mortification and solitary seeking vain, because they did not touch the heart of the problem—the self-seeking will. And if he had followed out that insight he would have seen that nothing can touch this except a greater passion; that the burning sense of duty, and still more of love, is the only flame that will consume not only the sparks of

THE BUDDHIST PARADOX

temptation but also the smouldering embers of selfish desire. This heat of the lust-to-live cannot be smothered, so to speak, but only quenched by a greater passion, as sunshine extinguishes fire-light.

Here, then, lies the weakest point in Buddhist psychology, which involves also a fatal flaw in the older Buddhist doctrine of salvation. So far as it succeeded in practice, it did so only in virtue of a noble inconsistency. For the discipline of the Noble Eightfold Path is, in theory at least, the effort to annihilate desire by desiring, to commit suicide of the will by willing; and it is clear that this involves a self-contradiction. For if the consciousness looks for no saving strength from outside itself, its unselfishness remains only an enlightened self-interest, its self-negation is only a violent form of self-assertion, and it remains bound upon the wheel of existence with the fetters of desire. So the Buddhist soul in its search for release yet continued, at least in its own belief, to revolve round the pivot of self-consciousness: the eyes of the devotee still turned in upon himself to obtain release from what he found there within. And this is (both logically and psychologically) an impossible method, since the soul is only able to take flight from itself in a power outside; its bonds can only be broken by something stronger than the self that forged them. No mere negation of desire to keep them can effect the change, or rather, such a desire can never be generated from the same source as that which created them. Self-

consciousness is so made as to need a positive end and force other than itself to liberate it from itself—something which will not mean its mere disappearance but fusion into something more worth having.

But this something the early Buddhist did find, however illogically. He started from the immensely fruitful recognition of the evil within. The facts of consciousness are the necessary basis for any thought of salvation. 'Our heart is restless' is the necessary antecedent of 'until it find rest in Thee!' The clear selection of this starting-point is an advantage to Buddhism which can hardly be overstated. And it combined therewith the true perception that all morality, to have any ultimate value, must proceed from an aim wider in range than itself. And then it made the saving leap. In contradiction of his merely negative principle of simply killing desire, the primitive Buddhist 'took refuge in' the objective reality of the ideal—the Buddha in whom it had obtained success, the Dharma, the pattern of his true life, laid up in the heavens as we might say, and the Sangha, the corporate embodiment of this saving principle. Here was found the positive magnet, which was powerful enough to draw him away from the attractions of self. The squirrel-cage of desires, in which he was conscious of being imprisoned, was shattered by an intrusion from outside.

But the earliest Buddhism failed to realise the new and personal outlook that was implied in the

effective existence of saving power. Such a needed force could not be merely impersonal law or unconscious mechanism, since the result could then have been only a straining at the bars. It was thus quite unconsciously that those early men and women were 'taking refuge in' an 'Unknown God'; they had converse with the will and love of One they barely felt, as children find rest in obedience and trust without full communion of soul, or even any conscious relation to a person at all.

But in the long run this failure of the classical doctrine to make room for the experience proved fatal. The Buddha's ultimate agnosticism in the end proved incompatible with his certainties. With him, no doubt, the denial of God and the soul was the outcome, partly of defective analysis, partly of reaction against contemporary dogma which had a pantheistic trend. But he did not succeed in constructing an alternative system which could bear the weight of his assertions as to the way of salvation. Like Lucretius in the Greco-Roman world, he denied the theology of his time in the interest of religion in order to release man from the burden of life; but like him, too, he failed to provide any full solution of the problem or to give any fundamental expression to his underlying convictions. And this short-coming revenged itself by the gradual disintegration of those very certainties with which he started, under the stress of spiritual needs which his formulæ only partially satisfied. His negations

and silences failed to answer the deepest questionings of the human spirit, and this irresponsiveness left room for endless corruption.

Thus his concentration on the problem of eliminating sorrow caused him to turn a blind eye to the fact that the consciousness of such sorrow implies a positive capacity for joy, and to cut the demands that such a possession entails if it is to be satisfied. He had refused to concern himself with anything which he did not see to be directly concerned with this question of suffering, and by turning aside here he opened the gates to a flood of opinions which eventually washed away even the bedrock of his own convictions. His later followers felt themselves at liberty, and indeed forced, to make insertions which finally evicted his own solution of the problem. For if the experience of salvation required a saving force from outside, there must be a power from whom this could flow. And if, as even he admitted, there could be in the universe persons higher than human, why could not they provide the necessary help to salvation? And if the background of the world even contained such persons, could the destination of all the foreground be impersonal? Could unconsciousness or Not-being form the end of existence? But the Buddha provided no adequate answer to these questionings. He was so concerned to inculcate his cure for sorrow caused by 'thirst' that he did not take stock of all the conditions of the problem. He did not care to contemplate all

the possibilities or to face and fulfil this 'thirst' as the half-felt need of men for a living God. 'My soul is athirst,' said the Hebrew poet too, but added, 'for God, yea, even for the living God.' But the Buddha only saw that it was in the first place for 'that which satisfieth not,' and stopped short at proclaiming that the soul must cease to thirst for such dross.

This ultimate agnosticism of the Buddha had further consequences as well. Combined with the Indian lack of drive and tenacity (of which perhaps it was itself only a form), it caused the native genius of Buddhism to show an easy comprehensiveness and pliancy—a capacious tolerance towards ways of thought and practice not its own. Buddhism proved itself thoroughly permeable, almost porous like a sponge, and often admitted into its inmost being strong solvents which destroyed or transmuted its most vital fibres. The number of times it has in different places undergone a 'sea-change' suggests a certain instability and lack of inherent vitality in the substance of its faith. Its peaceful partition of Chinese religion with Taoism and Confucianism to-day, and its fusion with animistic beliefs in Burma and with other, possibly gnostic, elements in Japan, and still more its complete corruption by Tantrism in Tibet, seem to show an absence of real absorptiveness and self-preservative power. And, significantly enough, it was only when Buddhism in these cases became allied with a strong national religion, or per-

meated with matter drawn from an outlook on the world alien to its own, that it was ever prepared to hazard its life in the maintenance of an unchanging faith, as in the great persecutions of China and Japan, and the exclusive faiths of Burma and Tibet.

On the other hand, the historian of religion is bound to regard its general tolerance and belief in propagation by suasion alone as admirable and unusual traits. It is true that the extremities to which this was carried, strike the adherents of less patient faiths as rather thin-blooded at times. It seems almost as if the Buddhist desire to eliminate the feelings had corroded the iron of their resolution, and made a passionate devotion to the Buddha a contradiction in terms. Perhaps it is legitimate to suppose that if the Buddha's analysis had given as much weight to the emotions as to the reason, his followers would have found a more stable equilibrium of faith, and their answer to human needs would have been broader-based on human nature and more satisfying in consequence.

For as Buddhism is presented to us in the early texts, it is 'all sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'—it has an essentially scholastic appearance. The doctrine seems 'scientific' to the point of pedantry and intellectual to the length of being inhuman. On the surface at least it presents an impersonal dogmatism which has little appeal to the general heart of mankind. In its purer forms, at any rate, it seems to possess little of that special

strength which marks at least one of the other great religions—the power to carry with it the poor, the simple, and the weak as well as the great, the wise, and the strong. Yet we must, of course, remember that later written documents alone are left us from the first youth of the Buddha's religion, and these must have allowed much of its fragrance to evaporate, and failed especially to keep many of those elements in it which made the most personal appeal. When tasted in the flesh, no doubt it possessed attractions for the 'little children' of that day who are now as dead as itself. But still it is not unfair to make a comparison of these dry bones with what corresponds to them in other religions—the literary deposit of their first age.* And any such comparison will be a contrast in at least one case. For if we put the books, which give the picture of the Buddha derived from the thoughts and memories of his contemporaries, alongside the reminiscences of a very different life still fresh from the hills of Galilee, it will open our eyes to new horizons. The Buddha himself is a lay figure beside that speaking likeness of One Whose power of personal attraction is still strong in Him. And here after all lies the main criterion for religions of the historical kind (Mohammedanism and Christianity as well as Buddhism)—the character of their founder. It is his person and place in the religions which must determine their value as religions of redemption.

And here in early Buddhism we find that for the

devout disciple the person of his Master always stood behind his doctrine and drew all its value from that. The Buddha is hardly a person for the tradition at all; he is all teaching, no acts or passion. His position is rather as a mouthpiece for the law, a bearer of the light. The only place where his own personal will and character appear, as at all important for their own sake, is in his refusal to enter Nirvana until he has preached the saving truth. But as we have seen, this self-denial must seem, in the light of his subsequent teaching, not much more than acquiescence in a psychological impossibility. For if he turned away from men owing to a longing for Nirvana (as a positive object of desire and not merely the result or state of desirelessness), he would still be bound on the wheel of rebirth. There can, however, be no doubt that this is the fact to which Buddhist devotion came to attach most importance. It suggested to the souls of the devout the same sort of idea as the Christian found in the belief that Christ 'came down for our sakes'—'became poor,' etc. And this must have possessed for the simple devotee the same appeal to gratitude.

Beyond this point, however, there is no further similarity between the place of the two figures in the adherence of their first followers. And the contrast reaches its height in the story of their deaths and the meaning assigned to each. In both cases the facts and manner of their ends are among the most certain data of history, since neither was

a climax which the disciples would wish to attribute to their hero as the conclusion of his career. But no saving significance has ever in Buddhist thought been attached to the passing of their master. Dying in a ripe old age from the effects of Smith Chunda's pork, it was clear that the Buddha was not sacrificing his life, even as a martyr. And with regard not only to his death but also to his whole life, it is this quite earthly and uninspiring character of the Buddha's portrait which makes the religion weak in proportion as it is historical. The Buddha's manifestation seems to lack that fullness of appeal for all the sides of mankind which so clearly marks the life and death of Jesus, as not only indubitably historical but most concretely ideal.

This is, of course, partly the cause and partly the result of the secondary position of the Buddha in the religion he founded. He was only a vehicle for the expression of truth. And this view has its consequence in the nature of the Buddhist Trinity—the Buddha, the Law, and the Order. These are all, at most, impersonal ideas, and the faith in them does not centre in the notion of personal life as does the Christian belief in the Trinity. The Three, for Buddhism, are simply the Light-bringer, the Light brought, and the Lantern. If a parallel is sought for this in Christian literature and tradition, it will be found in the Old Testament rather than in the New. These three connected objects of faith are much more like the belief, which is often dominant

though unsystematised for the later Jewish writers, in Moses, the Law, and the People of God. What was of value for both the Buddhist and the Jew was the truth once delivered and then preserved, rather than the personal life in its appeal to will and exertion. But even here one has to notice that the whole setting is altered by the deeply religious attitude of the Israelite, who behind these saw Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, while for the Buddhist the saving law was all in all.

Finally, the attitude of the typical Buddhist towards the Buddha had from the point of view of any deep religious thought another great defect. It lacked any sense of finality or completeness to the revelation of truth, still more of God. The Buddha was, indeed, considered as unique in a way, but he was held to be only the Buddha for one epoch, and consequently, though supremely important for those in it, he could not be conceived as holding any incomparable place in the whole great scheme of things. This feature came, no doubt, from the radical failure of the original Buddhism as a religion—the lack of a supreme and personal God. Since there was for the earlier Buddhist no one great Spirit behind the world, it was impossible for any human spirit to stand in any special relation to him. It is of no great moment that the Norm has found *this* medium of expression: *others* will be needed and will be found. But, whether true or not, it is quite plain that this view was far less effective as a gospel

for the believers. It tended to weaken their sense of the importance of the revelation, still more of the revealer—or rather, perhaps, expressed its weakness. It made the message seem less urgent and the teacher and system less all-sufficient for men of all lands and times. And the later developments of Buddhism in Amida-worship and all the Mahayana doctrine show the consciousness of this weakness. While they part company with history altogether, since there is no evidence for the existence of such persons, they do show how deep was the craving for One Who should be All in All and for ever—Alpha and Omega—Eternal, yet Incarnate, and to come. So much may be said of Buddhism as it changes in the process of growth.

If we try to sum up the general effect of this flowing current, this flux of Buddhist faith, it comes perhaps to something like this. We see that the stream of religious development, which starts with Gautama on his watershed of Hindu thought, appears like the rivers of Central Asia to have found the earth too dry for it. It only survived by receiving contributions from other sources, which changed alike its course and its contents, so that its final direction runs at least parallel with, at any rate, one other great historical religion, and its waters contain little that is peculiar to itself.

In taking stock of this last stage of the religion, as that in which all that was most typical of its first youth has vanished, one must of course except the

southern form of Buddhism still extant in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, which has throughout remained more or less true to type. Certain phases of neo-Buddhism, as exemplified specially in Japan, may also be ignored, except as indicating the directions in which the future apologetic for it may seek assistance from Western historical science and philosophy. The few characteristics of northern Buddhism singled out for mention in the last chapter were intended only to be typical instances of the religious ideas which have sprung up within popular Buddhism untouched as yet by modern European civilisation and religion. As we shall see in a later chapter, they cannot be said to have arisen in complete independence of Western culture and faith as these took shape in the earlier state of Europe, but the process of assimilation has been unconscious, and popular Buddhism to-day, though a compound of heterogeneous elements, is yet a genuine product of the religious consciousness among Eastern peoples. It is as representing a type of devotion to an incarnate being as Saviour that we shall consider it here, although, as we shall find, it is hard for it to establish its claim to be such a religion in the full sense of the word. Of this later form, which we have described in outline only so far as it concerns the Buddha (or rather the Buddhas) at the end of the previous chapter, a few remarks will be sufficient here. How far it depended for its development on some knowledge at least of Catholic or Western Christianity we shall have to inquire in a later

chapter, while raising the same question as to the other religions we are studying. Here something may be said as to its characteristics in themselves.

On the surface it seems almost chameleon-like in colouring, since it approximates in its different forms so closely to the religions on which it was superimposed. Thus in Tibet the Mahayana has attained the form of Lamaism with the belief that the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is always reincarnated in successive Dalai Lamas. But one may say as a whole that faith in the Buddhas which is common to all its forms, even though backed by an ultimate theism, is not really a high type of religion, since it fails to make devotion to the Supreme Creator the living force in belief, and so does not succeed in uniting the religious, moral, and metaphysical activities of the human soul by fastening them together on a common object. Further, the moral characteristics attributed to the Buddhas (Mercy, etc.), though often of a high type, have not really succeeded in keeping the religion deeply ethical, since the popular stories of their previous lives as Bodhisattvas are for the most part simply non-moral. It is as though Christ were considered to have been previously incarnate not merely in the patriarchs of the Old Testament, but in the gods of the Greek Pantheon as well. Also, the anti-social trend of the highest piety in the northern Mahayana (as well as in the purer southern Buddhism), which sends men apart from the world to attain release, has the same general effect, not to mention the gross corruptions

of Tantric mysticism in its sexual form. And yet again the lack of any definite portrait of the Master, any canonical type of presentation, has given the concept of the Buddha a looseness and unreality which has had the gravest effect on the types of worship offered.

The susceptibility of later Buddhism to this criticism arises from its radical defect, viz. its complete severance from the historical Founder, or at least its indifference to the original character and views of the personal Gautama. The Mahayanist canon does indeed contain practically all that was present in the oldest books, but it contains so much besides which has nothing to do with them, and even contradicts them in essential points, that the original is swamped by the additions, and the person of the historical Buddha disappears in a haze thick with other figures, and redolent with other ideas than his. The consequence of this is, of course, that Buddhism cannot to-day be really called a religion of incarnation at all. In proportion as it increasingly claims to be so, it also ceases to view as the incarnate the only historical figure who had any claim to be so. And the reason is obvious, for he actually started the whole religion in a very different direction.

We may take it for certain that owing to the researches of modern scholars the attempt now being made to thrust Mahayana ideas back into the earlier Buddhism will not succeed in establishing itself. This means, of course, that the worship of the Buddhas is not original, and they themselves

are later imaginations. Now, when once this mythical character of the objects of worship, and late rise of the worship itself, are fully realised under the influence of modern science and historical inquiry, it will remain for those who wish to be Buddhists either to return to the original way of Gautamā or to strike out along the new paths boldly into the void. If they choose the former course, Buddhism as a faith in the Buddhas will cease, and the faith of the Buddha will take its place with all the weaknesses which we have noted; if the latter, their course will be unmarked by any traces of historical facts, and will lead them into a realm of entirely immaterial speculation. In either case the Buddhism of the future will not possess the strength of making the claim to deity for one who made it for himself while in the flesh; nor will it be able to make the whole saving process centre in adherence to one whose person is as indubitably historical as his community has always held it to be. But of this contrast more must be said in a later chapter, when we come to speak of the distinctive marks of Christian devotion to Christ.

Bibliography.—Texts in *Sacred Books of the East*. Useful selection in H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*. General books, Hackmann, *Buddhism*; *Encyc. of R. and E.* on all points. On original form, Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*; Oldenberg, *The Buddha*, etc.; Copleston, *Buddhism in Magadha and Ceylon*. On classical form, (Mrs.) R. Davids, *Buddhism* (in Home University Library). On development, A. Lloyd, *Creed of Half Japan*, etc. For modern Buddhist views, Paul Dahlke, *Buddhist Essays*; Prof. Anasaki, *Buddhist Ethics* (in Hastings' *Encyc. of Religion and Ethics*). •

CHAPTER IV

HINDUISM

Present Day

INDIA to-day has a population of some three hundred millions. The majority of them, upwards of two hundred million at least, are Hindu by religion. The main bulk of these are men whose practical religion consists of some form of faith in a divine being who appears on earth as incarnate. This faith is called *Bhakti* (adoration), and is directed towards Vishnu as the Bhagavat, the Adorable, whose incarnations are called avatars, and his worshippers Vaishnavas. They are also known as Bhagavatas, that is, practisers of *Bhakti*—adorers of the Adorable. But this title is not necessarily a special mark of the Vaishnavas, since *Bhakti* is also the property of the worshippers of Śiva (Śaivas, as they are called). The term is a general description of religious attitude, and only implies personal devotion, which need not be addressed to its object as incarnate at all, since in Śaivite religion, though there is *Bhakti*, there are no incarnations. But it is the modern forms of *Vaishnava Bhakti* and their antecedents that

need studying here, since, with their doctrine of avatars and their general character of tenderness (as compared with the more fearful traits often present in Śaivite Bhakti), they constitute a religion which presents the closest analogy to Christian devotion.

This way of approach to Vishnu is not uniform or pure; in some circles, for instance, Vishnu almost disappears in the great Brahma, the All-God of Hindu theology, and almost everywhere this Bhakti is accompanied by the cult of certain devas or non-incarnate divinities such as Hanuman, the monkey-god, and Ganésa, the elephant-headed, and various deities of the village and home; and further, it usually includes, or allows, the worship of idols and of teachers as representing the Adorable. But this devotion to a saviour known as incarnate is as generally dominant in India as faith in Christ throughout Europe. Like Christianity, too, this Vaishnava Bhakti is divided within itself into churches and sects which represent it in different forms and with varying degrees of purity, both in belief and practice. These can, however, be treated as sufficiently united in certain main features to represent a common type.

The principal tenets in which most of them agree may perhaps be divided under three heads for our purpose.

- (1) There is one God above and beyond all things,
•who is also their source. He is treated as

personal, but is usually identified with the Brahma of classical Hindu philosophy, which, as we shall see later, might be either masculine or neuter. This supreme being manifests himself as Vishnu, who is worshipped under the title Bhagavat, the Adorable.

- (2) Vishnu is worshipped as god of grace. It is his gracious care for man (prasāda, a keyword of Bhakti) which causes him to take the form of man in various incarnations (in the fullest system, 24), of whom Rama and Krishna have been the chief in the past, and one is even yet to come.
- (3) It is to Vishnu in his incarnations that the living religion and longing for salvation attaches itself. By directing devotion towards him in this way, the spirit of man, which is also conceived of as personal and eternal, can attain saving communion and finally enter into a conscious union with the Adorable.

We may note here several points about this faith and its consequences in practice.

- (1) Other divinities (devas) are by no means denied, but they are so conceived and treated that the true worshipper is a monotheist, or rather unitarian (ekantin). This does not, however, bear upon anything but the ultimate view held by the

Bhagavata. He 'recognises one Transcendental God alone,'¹ but his immediate worship may, and indeed must, be directed to a number of 'lords' (i.e. temple gods) and teachers (gurus) representing that God.

- (2) Works, the performance of the ordinary moral law, are viewed as only indirectly necessary (though necessary), since it is only so far as they lead to or proceed from Bhakti that they convey eternal salvation: otherwise, owing to their embodying desire, they only produce fruit in reincarnation according to the universal Hindu doctrine. Consequently the Bhagavata need not be an ascetic, but if he live in society he must fulfil all his social duty as the means of perfecting his offering to the Bhagavat.
- (3) The ultimate end of Bhakti is eternal, individual, conscious existence 'at the feet of the Adorable,' 'seeing Him,' 'being like Him,' but not (as we shall see was held in the Vedantic doctrine formulated by Sankara) *being* Him, or rather *it*. This ultimate end, however, is never conceived as really beginning here and now, since the very existence of a body always for the Hindu implies a lower state of existence,

¹ Wide Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 403.

which can only be overcome in a series of lives.

- (4) This consummation is only hindered by faults in such devotion (unbelief, lack of faith, want of trust, selfishness) and sins which lead to, and proceed from, them, especially the failure to be detached from everything but the object of devotion. But in most Bhakti caste has become so much the condition of communion that breaking it is regarded as bad Bhakti. Hence this can hardly claim to be a "pure spiritual religion."
- (5) It follows, however, that the true worshipper is no hired servant, but, as it were, a son, or rather, as they prefer to put it, the slave born in the house. But it is noticeable that this is not conceived as extending to the formation of a complete family of all the Faithful. For, though if a man became a 'sannyasi' ('renouncer') he would be beyond caste, yet otherwise he has to keep to caste restriction. It is only for one who has renounced society that all men can be brothers.

To sum up its good points, we may say that the doctrine of Bhakti is one of a loving God, communion with Whom is possible for man through love of Him. This has as its means a certain

emotional attitude towards His Incarnation, and as its end a conscious attainment of union, but not identity, with Him. It is distinguished from other Hindu systems, past and present, by the emphasis that it lays on the personality both of God and of man, by the value it assigns to the religious use of feeling, by direction of devotion towards God as revealed in human form, and by the concentration on eternal life with God, but without absorption in Him. It is obvious also that in all these points it approaches Christianity. We must now turn to trace the history of this upwards to its source, and may perhaps take it in three stages.

HISTORY

First Stage Backwards

The antecedents of this faith can indeed be traced, as we shall see later, almost as far back as religion is recorded in India, but it received its present form and life through a revival or recreation of faith in mediæval Hinduism, which started in the twelfth, and attained its greatest power in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of our era. Ramanuja, the 'Morning Star' of this Indian reformation as we may call it, was born¹ about the beginning of the twelfth century, not far from the shrine of St. Thomé, near Madras, and thus grew up in a centre where

¹ According to Grierson in *Encyc. of Religion and Ethics*, art. 'Bhakti-marga,' pp. 545 and 548, and especially 549.

there had been from early times a Christian Church,¹ which by his day, however, had become partially paganised.

He found all Indian thought dominated by the pantheistic monism of the Vedanta, as formulated by the great schoolman Sankara in the ninth century. The work of this Indian Aquinas, though admitting endless varieties of opinion and practice, united them all in the common features of the caste system, ceremonial observances, a contemplative ideal, and a thorough-going metaphysic. It gave room in its theory for Bhakti to subordinate gods, ~~but not to the~~ Supreme, which, as impersonal, could not really be the object of a personal devotion. Consequently no one could be saved by Bhakti. Such faith was not even, as it came to be later, recognised and justified as one of the three 'paths' to salvation, along with knowledge and works (Bhakti-, gnana-, and kârma-marga). So also Vishnu, the main object of such adoration, was thought of in this Vedantism as only a special form or manifestation of the ultimate divine All, while Rama and Krishna, who were regarded by the Bhagavatas as his incarnations, seem to have been for it not much more than deified heroes. On the other hand, their worship had been popular for centuries, and had long ceased to be confined (as we shall see it probably was originally) to any limited hereditary clientèle. But it had now

¹ *Vide* chapter ix. pp. 148-150.

become swamped intellectually, and even to a large extent devotionally, in the impersonal beliefs generated by the monistic background of the neuter, qualityless Brahmā. This philosophical abstraction had come entirely to overshadow the positive masculine Brahmā, and sucked the substance from reality by its treatment of all phenomena as 'illusion' (maya).

The epoch-making reform initiated by Ramanuja consisted in the fact that he preached Bhakti as the way of salvation and affirmed that the object of it was the Supreme, the Most High Himself. He identified this Bhagavat, Vishnu as the Adorable, with Brahmā treated as masculine, and worshipped Rama and Krishna as the real incarnations of this essentially personal god, thus rescuing the Bhagavatas from the deadening weight of that impersonal theology which they had accepted. This concentration on love for One adored in His Incarnation (it did not, and does not, matter 'in Vishnu-land *what* avatar'), known as 'very God of very God' come down to save mankind, is as plainly the distinctive mark of the Bhakti reformation as it is clearly akin to Christian beliefs, whether dependent on them or not.

Ramanuja's younger contemporary, Madhva, who played the Huss to his Wiclif, so to speak, was a man of Kalyana,¹ where there had been a Christian bishopric since the sixth century. He broke with Brahma

¹ According to Grierson *loc. cit.*, pp. 546, 548, and 549 (note).

altogether, both in thought and practice, calling the Supreme Vishnu, and laying stress on dualism (God and the soul, spirit and matter, etc.)—a strain of which, as we see in the Samkhya philosophy, had been present throughout the whole course of Hindu thought. He agrees with Ramanuja in the key-doctrine of Bhakti as the way of salvation, and in the total rejection of illusion as the explanation of existence. He too discards, at least by implication, along with scholasticism and asceticism, contemplation, ceremonial, and caste, as at best unnecessary.

But Ramanuja and Madhva only prepared the way and sowed the seed in a more or less limited field for the great spread and harvest of Bhakti in the next two centuries. This was due to their doctrine as popularised, preached, and practised in the fourth spiritual generation from them by Ramananda and his disciples (among whom, however, was the Mohammedan mystic Kabir, who initiated a deistic movement). Carried by these preachers north as well as south, the gospel of Bhakti swept the country and produced such a religious revival as India had never known before. The spiritual atmosphere becomes so rare and rich that sainthood, mysticism, and poetry flourish in it with a purity and luxuriance that find no parallel outside the greatest periods of mediæval Christianity. It seems as if a new fountain had suddenly been tapped, and flooded the land.

Second Stage

But such an appearance can hardly be said to correspond wholly with the historical reality. To attribute this outpouring to a sudden unsealing of some virgin spring would be to misstate the fact. It is rather due to a clearing of the channels for a resurgent, slowly gathered flood. The doctrine and practice of Bhakti as a way of salvation is, as we have said, older, and, even in its incarnational form, had long been characteristic of the Vaishnava sects ; and, although their spirit had been partially overpowered by the pantheistic fumes of the Vedantic monism taught by Sankara, it still breathed, even before its resuscitation by Ramanuja. For such suppression and recovery of a point which became vital to later religion, we may compare the way in which the belief in God's love persisted through a state of suspended animation in Pharisaism, and salvation by faith, as St. Paul points out, had always been a half-unconscious tenet of the Old Testament saints. As in the New Testament contrasted with the Old, so in the new Bhakti it is the novelty of emphasis as well as the rediscovery which makes the world of difference between this and its former self. And there is added to that freshness a rushing vitality and soaring certainty imparted by new experience of the old truth.

For the 'Bhagavad-gita,' or Song of the Adorable, which is, so to speak, the Isaiah of Bhakti-marga, had

existed in India for at least a millennium before Ramanuja and Madhva. As we have it and they found it, it is an episode in the encyclopædic epic of the Mahabharata, and, along with it, had been accepted as orthodox by current Hindu thought. But this very fact proves that the full significance later attributed to its doctrine of Bhakti was not usually realised, just as the acceptance of the Second Isaiah's figure of the Suffering Servant by orthodox Judaism proves that it was not ordinarily emphasised as Messianic. Like Isaiah, this Song of the Adorable is itself a miscellany of different dates; but in its oldest parts it is probably pre-Christian.¹ In this form, together with the generally received doctrine about works and meditation, it probably inculcated, as at any rate one way of salvation, an at least henotheistic faith in Krishna—that is, devotion to him as a single (if not the only) personal God as incarnate. In the later form of the poem (probably A.D.), however, he is identified with the neuter Brahṃā, the All-God, manifesting itself as Vishnu.

The sect, whose tenets the poem in its various forms seems to represent, appears even when it was first written to have been called Bhagavatas (worshippers of the Adorable), but, like their Gita, they seem in their pre-Reformation period to have trended steadily in the direction of an ultimate pantheism, though retaining elements of a more

¹ According to Garbe in the Introduction to his German translation of the *Bhāgavad-gīta*. See also his article on it in *Encyc. of R. and E.*

personal attitude. Obviously the doctrine of the grace of God (prasāda) and love for His love (Bhakti) are not really compatible with a primarily rationalistic and static conception of things such as Vedantism, and accordingly we find that, although the Bhagavata doctrine was still held and taught, it had ceased to be really effective by the time of its glorified resurrection in the early centuries of the Middle Ages. For this, again, we might perhaps compare to some extent the partial eclipse of the Pauline and Augustinian teaching of grace and love by the Aristotelian authority of the schoolmen in the later mediæval Christianity. Here, too, the mainly emotional and volitional emphasis of the earlier position had largely passed into a more legal and intellectual statement (at least) of the faith. In the one case as in the other, however, it does seem clear that personal devotion to the figure of an incarnate was already present, even before its recreation, as a native product of the religious genius of mankind in its Indian as in its Christian line of development. .

Third Stage .

It is important, therefore, to try and trace this attitude as far back in Indian religion as we can find it, and to see what were its earliest characteristics, as clearly as possible. In attempting this it will be essential to inquire whether or not the object of such worship be conceived of as an *incarnation* as

well as *incarnate*—i.e. God in His own right come as man. We shall have to notice, that is, whether it is a matter of devotion to a form of a more ultimate theism, i.e. Brahma (or one of his manifestations) become flesh, or whether we are dealing with what might be conceived rather as the deification of a human hero.

In the welter of Aryan nature-gods, which gave rise to the Vedic pantheon and later to the Vedantic pantheism, there were some, such as Indra and Varuna, to whom there was addressed what can hardly be distinguished from Bhākti. Yet this attitude of faith was not directed towards them as incarnate, still less as incarnations, but simply as Olympian powers. The word bhakti itself is first met as anathematised in Buddhist scriptures of the fourth century B.C. Such devotion was therefore already a well-known religious phenomenon, but there is nothing in the context where the mention of it occurs to show the character of its object—whether incarnate or not. It might conceivably be used of an avatar or some similar idea even then. It would seem, however, to mean merely attachment to a particular god, or to God in general. We do not clearly find it used of any plainly incarnational form of religion until the Gita.

It is therefore more illuminating to try and discover the history of Krishna, with whom, as incarnate, we find it definitely connected in the Gita. It would seem that he was originally a tribal hero

of certain Aryans in prehistoric times outside what was called, and was, the 'midland' of Vedic and Brahmanic influence. This 'outland' prophet-chief was perhaps himself the founder of a clan monotheism or monolatry (belief in, or worship of, one God) with a pronounced ethical character. He himself, at any rate, becomes in time the object of their devoted adherence. It would seem that the worshippers of this hero belonged, like the early Buddhists later on, primarily to the Ksatriya or warrior caste rather than to the Brahmins or priests, who were Brāhmanists or adherents of Brahma. In this connection it is noticeable that, in the Gita, it is the knight Arjuna to whom Krishna addresses his discourses as an encouragement to fight. This Ksatriya-supported foundation represented the more or less strong theistic back-wash in their caste, as opposed to the main stream of Brahmapist orthodoxy which even in the earlier Upanishads is rapidly debouching into pantheism.

At first, then, it seems probable that Krishna-Bhakti and Brahmanism were to some extent opposed. It is most likely that it was the conflict with the natural enemy of both, the earlier Buddhist atheism, with its tendencies even more hostile to Bhakti than to Brahmanism, that brought the two together. They formed a sort of union for mutual protection. Each had to pay a price for this defensive alliance, the Brahmanists in the practical attribution of a personal character to the ultimate

divine Brahma and the identification of the Bhagavat, the object of personal devotion, with his manifestation Vishnu, and the Bhagavatas in the impersonal philosophy and ceremonial clericalism with which they thus compromised their faith. The poem we know as the Bhagavad-gita is probably a manifesto of the allied forces, and gives consequently a view which is not wholly self-consistent. As an early expression of the resultant contradiction in the soul of a Bhagavata, it attempts to reconcile theistic devotion with a pantheistic metaphysic. In it the Adorable, Krishna Vasudeva, is now fully identified with Vishnu, and so has also (as in the older form of the poem he had not) finally coalesced with the Pantheos, while the neuter Brahmā, of whom Vishnu is a projection, wears its personal attributes with a very ill grace.

Summary

To sum up the course of this early development of Bhakti, it may be said that devotion to an incarnate divine being, Krishna, became devotion to him as an incarnation of a deity, Vishnu, who was further identified with a thinly-veiled impersonal All-God. This veil was almost entirely removed by Sankara, and the existence of Bhakti endangered. The importance of the later reformation under Ramanuja and his followers was, that it thrust the personal and gracious character of the incarnation back again upon the ultimate being, and reclothed the lay-

figure in the background with all the colour and richness of this representation, breathing into it afresh the spirit of personal life. Thus *It* became *He*, and He was such an one as Rama-Krishna. So the end of this evolution of Hindu religion is, at its highest, the love of a personal and loving God made man for man's sake.

It is obvious to the most superficial glance how remarkably this Bhakti seems to resemble Christian devotion to Christ and to God through Him. We shall have later to inquire whether, and at what point, and to what extent, actual historical contact with Christianity has affected the direction and colouring of this completed, incarnational religion. We seem to have found, by tracing it backwards from the present, that it is no doubt, at least partly, an intuition of the Indian spirit independently. It should be noticed, however, without prejudicing the question of its origin, that its clearly pre-Christian form is only such a belief in an incarnate God as was held, e.g. by the worshippers of Heracles, in the Hellenistic world, and, in spite of practical assertions of it before, it is not until the great revival of the Middle Ages that we get a clearly monotheistic view combined with a belief in God's becoming man. It is to the examination of this, its final form, that we must next turn. We shall attempt now to consider its character as a religion in itself, and only in relation to its history so far as that throws light on its own meaning.

CHAPTER V

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HINDU BHAKTI

At its highest and best we find in the representatives of this religious tendency (it can, perhaps, hardly be regarded as sufficiently unified to constitute a religion), certain more or less distinct marks which give it specific importance for the history and philosophy of our subject. Perhaps the following points may stand as a summary of them, since they have for the most part been touched upon in the previous chapter.

(1) It shows a highly spiritual monotheism with God, both as Creator and Lord of Grace—a being with such love for man as in some form to become incarnate in order to save him. The keynotes of this belief are, on the side of God *prasāda*, gracious care, and on the side of man *bhakti*, responsive faith and love. But while this is the devotional attitude of the most typical *Bhagavata*, it is allied with—

(a) A strongly monistic philosophy, the frequent recrudescence of which in practice as well as thought leads in directions ultimately

impersonal, if not pantheistic, and gives a strong hold to the doctrine of 'Karma'¹ (and therefore of the essential evil of activity), making moral character, action, or purpose seem unworthy of God: and

- (b) A tolerance of worship offered to a number of more or less powerful, though subordinate, spirits which seem to fill the horizon for the less educated or less spiritual minds, along with a liability to substitute the worship of idols and gurus (teachers), etc., even for the supposed incarnations.

It might perhaps be fairly maintained that these two facts have little more effect on the total value of the general type than the outcrop of deistic elements in Christianity, the Aristotelianism of Aquinas, or the prevalence of Greek philosophical ideas in the Fathers on the one side, and on the other the general occurrence in certain periods and places of angel- or martyr-worship in Christendom, and even the transfiguration of pagan heroes into Christian saints, as well as the widespread abuse of images at different times. In both cases, perhaps, the main belief is really centred on the one personal God through His Incarnation.

But we have to notice as to the first that in the case of Hindu Bhakti the orthodox theology accepted

¹ That purposed action in past lives determines present state, and in present life insures future incarnation: so release only by ceasing to will, or at least to desire thing willed—like Brahma itself.

by it is of a type at root not really susceptible of the devotional interpretation it receives—the *lex credendi* is not really compatible, much less one, with the *lex orandi*. It is as though Christianity, instead of formulating the creeds and evolving its own standard theology, had been content to take over the Neoplatonic philosophy of religion without alteration. In this case certain elements in Christian mysticism which draw on that source, instead of being checked by the distinctively Christian formulæ, would be the only legitimate consequences of these theological presuppositions. And this is precisely what seems to be the case with their Hindu correlatives, with the result that the true orientation of devotion receives little, if any, stability from its intellectual accompaniments. The heart may be directed towards the Bhagavat, but the mind is taught to see only Brahṁā.

And a similar contrast appears in regard to the second point. This lies in the fact that Christianity has never accepted (as was shown in the crucial case of the Chinese Rites)¹ those who were known to be pagans as in any sense worthy of Christian worship, while the pliant comprehensiveness of Hindu Bhakti has received all (even in some forms Christ Himself) into its capacious calendar. And further, from the practical point of view, it is very

¹ After a thorough controversy the Pope refused to sanction the Jesuit acceptance of a modified ancestor-worship on the ground that such ancestors had not been 'in Christ.'

important to notice that the barely transcendent and 'impassible' character attributed to the Supreme made even its incarnations seem unreal, so that those who wished to worship invariably felt bound to seek more tangible and approachable points of contact in actual human teachers and in visible images such as often obscured the reality behind, and in any case constituted a permanent danger. And here the contrast is clear.*

(2) We see that Bhakti involves a real belief in the possibility, and indeed necessity, of divine incarnation and a personal attitude of loyalty and love to God incarnate. This may rightly be held to elevate the whole conception as to the possibilities of man and human life. It does at least imply that God and man are not to be regarded as utterly disparate. They are at least so near akin to each other as not to exclude the naturalness and worthiness of a theophany in the flesh. But this only implies man as a medium of revelation, and is different from a real incarnational belief, and is held by the worshippers of Śiva, who deny incarnation. The question is how such revelation is conceived. And of this we shall have to speak later. And again, when we come to treat of the kind of personality in whom God was believed to be incarnate, we shall have to discuss how far this belief implies a worthy apprehension of His nature. Meanwhile, however, it does seem clear that the fact of belief that a God-head, as highly spiritual as that which we have seen

the Bhakti belief to postulate, should be thought of as becoming in any sense man. It all must be held to dignify the whole notion of humanity.

On the other hand, it does not appear that such a god was held to be capable of being fully and finally manifested in one single figure of a human person who would have a unique and satisfying significance for all time. It was believed that there had been already some twenty-three projections, as it were, of the Divine into human form, and there was at least one more yet to come; so that, if God were really such as they severally were, it must follow that it was only by the summation of their characteristics that His being could be even adumbrated at all truly. This of course implies that humanity is not really an adequate vehicle for God's revelation of Himself even to man. Or if, as in the Bhagavad-gita, the reason for these successive appearances of God in the shape of man was rather the ever-recurrent corruption of human nature, it would seem that no one of those incarnations was certainly conceived as the all-sufficing source of recreative power working in the midst, and through the medium, of all succeeding humanity. The Incarnate could not be for them the giver of His spirit, which was, and should be, the saving force for all ages and races. Therefore, of course, no human society is considered capable of being completely the bearer of divine life.

A further and most important point in this relation is the manner in which the divinity is held to dwell

in the human body. This is often spoken of as 'play,' 'sport' as though it were but a disguise, a cloak, which was assumed for a temporary purpose of mock concealment. Of course this implies the ultimate impossibility of any real union between human personality and the divine. It involves all the ideas which were condemned by the Christian Church in Docetism—that the incarnate only appeared to be man, that God (or the Son of God) could not really suffer, etc. And indeed this follows directly from the current Hindu idea of Brahman, who, as essentially the being outside Karma, is incapable of real action or any of the other evils (as they are supposed to be) of humanity.

Now, of course, such unreal pretence is something quite foreign to the Christian idea of divine incarnation and seems unworthy both of God and man. It is, however, worth noticing that much which has passed among Christians for orthodox theology has been really very close to this, owing to an agreement with the idea of God taken over from the Stoics that He is essentially *ἀπαθής*—that is, incapable of 'passion' either in the sense of suffering or that of feeling, especially love or wrath. This implies that the highest state is one in which all that we know as personality is done away, and not merely one where its expressions are purged of baser elements and made pure activity. This clearly is very like the Hindu doctrine that, in order to remain outside Karma, God must never act or purpose or really love

so as to suffer in Himself, and is quite a different understanding of His nature from that which has been active in the great times of Christianity from the New Testament on. But in India the universal idea of God is stoical, and it is this which makes all real incarnation impossible, entirely at least for Hindu theology and partially for Hindu devotion.

(3) These facts have their effect on the Bhagavata doctrine of salvation—the end of man. It is obvious that this is also of a highly spiritual character—nothing less than personal union with a personal God. The soul, when once emitted from the Adorable (of whom it was originally a part) to a separate conscious existence, is never to be merely reabsorbed, but progressively more and more united to Him. This growth of the soul is distinguished into four stages as the state of—

‘the tied’ (*i.e.* to the flesh, etc.=the ‘natural man’);

‘the desirers’ (*i.e.* of salvation=awakened seekers);

‘the devoted’ (*Bhakta*, *i.e.* those being saved through *Bhakti*); and

‘the released’ (*i.e.* the saints who have attained).

These last alone see God and enjoy Him continually.

Clearly, so far as salvation affects the state of the individual soul, the Bhagavata does not differ much from the Christian in the formulation of his ultimate

ideal. But salvation is always in religion a matter of relation, and in spiritual religion of a relation between persons. So the quality of the relationship is intimately affected by the definition of the nature of the Divine Person, and here we have already seen a contrast. But, as far as the state of the individual soul in itself is concerned, to a large extent there is likeness. It is clear when we come to ask what is the character of the relation between God and the soul (of whatever sort they are), and what this implies, that we find a number of contrasts.

For in the first place the conception of this relationship in Hindu Bhakti is frankly individualistic—each soul enters on the way alone and arrives (if it does arrive) alone. The people of God need not, indeed cannot, be regarded as ‘one flock,’ or rather there is no unity in the flock except that each belongs as a unit to a common shepherd. Thus no Hindu Church has ever held such an idea as the ‘communion of saints’—but only that of the mystic ‘flight of the alone to the Alone.’

And secondly, the scheme of salvation is at bottom dualistic—eternal life is never here and now as well as hereafter—the body is always a body of death, not the temple of the Spirit. In its aspirations the Hindu soul leaves this world behind. It is not merely that it refuses like all religious souls to be satisfied with it, but it becomes pessimistically other-worldly. For it the evil that is in the world is the very fact of bodily existence at all, so

that it could never give any meaning to a 'resurrection of the body.'

And finally, it is quietistic—it fails to give any clear and distinct presentation of the place of morality and action in religion. That sense of desperate unworthiness and worse, which Christians know as the consciousness of sin, has little place in the Hindu longing for union with the Adorable, and the willing of His will hardly forms part of the content of communion. The Bhagavata could never talk of the judgment-seat of Krishna, or think of Vishnu as Lord of the Vineyard. It is release from all activity which is the goal, and the will must cease to work, or at least work without desire.

These three points all seem to find their plainest expression in the Hindu attitude towards the Incarnate, and have some further consequences which will come out clearest in connection with it. As regards what has been said thus far, we may perhaps sum up such a scheme of salvation by saying that the personal relation of love is rather thought of as an atmosphere in which the saved soul bathes or basks when stripped of all desire even for bliss, and loosed from the bonds of what we know as humanity.

(4) And this comes out with regard to their view of incarnation. For in the first place, quite apart from any question as to the particular character of their incarnations, the Hindu attitude towards them seems to be one of comparative indifference as to

whether they have ever actually appeared in the field of phenomenal events or not. An almost complete lack of what one may call *historicity of outlook* characterises these beliefs about the Incarnate; since embodiment of the idea in the facts of an actual life or lives lived in time seems to the Hindu of minor importance, since the eternal truth, he supposes, is valid in any case. It might be uncertain whether God was made man in these particular cases, and yet, they would argue, the human moment would be so surely eternal in the Divine Being that for them it could make little difference whether there had or had not actually appeared such and such manifestations of it in this same tissue of events in which we live. The fact is unimportant. The *idea* is all that matters.

It is, of course, obviously true that any fact to have religious significance must be conceived as 'eternal,' that is, not merely a matter of time and space; but the real difference in religions (probably in general as well as incarnational religions in particular) is between those which regard the temporal as an essential means of approach to, a vehicle of, the eternal and those which do not. Hinduism clearly belongs to the latter class. The mystical character thus given to it does indeed liberate Hindu Bhakti from many of the embarrassments which beset strictly historical religions, such as Mohammedanism and Christianity. But the cost of this freedom, it would seem, is diffusion into

a subjective individualism in which all depends on personal preference. Those religions which have to adhere to the common ground of history—feeling their feet firmly placed on solid earth, whether they really are so or not—have found there a leverage and stability which are denied to their more airy competitors. Like Antæus in the myth, they gain from the nourishing soil reinforcement and resilience, although not without handicap.

(5) Perhaps it follows from this uncertainty of grasp on the value of the temporal that there is no Hindu Catholicism. In any case it is a marked characteristic of the fully developed Bhakti that it has so far failed to give concreteness to its convictions in a Church which should transcend class and caste and nation, making its aim the salvation of men's bodies and of human society as well as of individual souls. It has never found in the reorganisation of this world, besides the attainment of the next, the manifestation of the highest life within it. The bodiless idea has led to the unembodied ideal. The attempt to overcome caste was made early and has been repeated often, but as often failed, and one of the signs of national revival to-day in India has been the turning away from the traditional forms of Bhakti, because they have failed to supply motives and energy for the reconstruction of social life.

Of course, it is only too true that Christianity also

is split and shivered into sects and classes. It is probably much less so than Hinduism, but it is even more so than Mohammedanism, and, unlike Bhakti but like Islam, it has often been allied at least with persecutors.¹ But at the heart of Christianity as of Christ lies the faith in the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. There is in international Christendom at least the partially realised ideal, while Hinduism is confined to Indian caste society—and the Catholic Church, imperfect as it is, has no correlative in the varieties of Hindu Bhakti, whatever their claims to be one. The best spirits in Christianity have realised the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, although hindered by divisions even among Christians, while in Hinduism there has never been even aspiration in this direction. In Bhakti the religious attitude is, if one may put it so, always vertical and not also horizontal—seeking God but not finding man on the way to Him. It is true indeed that the corporate ideal has probably been far more fully realised in the Mohammedan community where the Faithful, in spite of their divisions, are one body in a sense that Christians are not; but the question then arises as to the value of the life in that body, of which in one form we shall have to speak in a later chapter.

Hinduism, on the other hand, has never pos-

¹ *Vide* remarks on persecution in Christendom in connection with the other Indian religion, Buddhism, and its tolerance. Also chapter xii. pp. 207 and *seq.*

sessed the faith in the spirit as necessarily informing and organising a body for itself. And this applies equally to the individual and the corporate. There is no doctrine of the actual community as the essential extension of the actual Incarnation, nor of each individual as an 'elect vessel.' Neither in the one nor the other is the Spirit really thought of as needing a body (or rather embodiment). Obviously this, if only from a propagandist point of view, must be a great weakness on the social scale, and many recent reform movements in Hinduism, which have seen it as such, have attempted to remedy it—but in vain. We see the fact in its clearest light when we remember that Hinduism without caste would not in any sense be Hinduism, while Christianity with it would certainly not be Christianity. The Hindu caste system, based on Karma, makes the place of men in this life depend on an infinite series of causes in past lives, and the effort to escape it is futile. This life as a fragment cannot be remedied. The Hindu mind at its most spiritual has no regard for this world, and this disregard finds its main cause and symptom in the completely unhistorical character of its incarnational beliefs.

(6) Further, from this it follows that there is for Bhakti no clear personal figure, communion with whom constitutes salvation. The personal relation is emphasised, but, so to speak, lacks character and content, and is liable to degenerate into mere emotionalism without a fully portrayed or clearly

realised object. For here it is essential that the worshipper should possess some plain picture of that being with whom he aspires to be united, and this is precisely what Hinduism lacks, since, even when one of the incarnations is more or less clearly presented, the view of faith is crossed and confused by differing traits drawn from others of the series. And in the case of Krishna at least the portrait is not even free from grossly immoral elements which find in practice their natural outcome in the (at best) non-moral worship of the child and youth Krishna. It may be maintained that this has no more real effect on the general value of the Bhakti type than the worship in Christian circles of the Bambino and the existence of the apocryphal gospels; and this would be true except that in Hinduism there is *no other* presentation of Krishna. The Hindu has no canonical Gospels at all, and so entirely lacks all the steadying and strength which Christian devotion draws from the clear characterisation of the central figure in the Gospel drama.

Consequently also the connection of faith with works, though formulated in much the same way as the Christian doctrine, lacks the driving force given to the latter by its deep sense that it is impossible to be with Christ unless by striving to be like Him. The result is rather the affection, as even the great reformer Chaitanya said, of a man for a maid than of the 'little ones' for 'the first-born of many brethren,' and so through Him for the Father. It

is the fact that Christians have the speaking image of their Lord in the Gospels which makes it impossible for Christianity long to stray into the by-ways of unethical emotion. It is further the consciousness of His personal claim which has driven the Christian Church to attempt on the scale of its corporate life to reveal that character again in man. But Hinduism has no fact of Krishna by which to judge and stimulate all aspirations for the individual and society.

(7) And here again we come to a great contrast in the character of the Hindu and Christian incarnations and the respective religions that rest on them. For in Hinduism none of the incarnations can be said to suffer, and certainly none to die, for man. And so it lacks the thrust of pain in the depths of it and becomes weak and shallow. This means that the Hindu soul, while feeling acutely the dualism at the heart of things, has never really succeeded in understanding, much less in transcending it. Quite apart from explaining evil, it has never even given the fact full weight. There is for it no positive something to be overcome by an equally positive something—sin by cleansing, pain by joy. The separation of man from God, by the Hindu held rightly the root of evil, is, in his belief, remedied directly man turns to recognise God in human form, Who saves by His mere coming down and being so seen of men. It is obvious that here the Christian religion, with its doctrine of atonement

achieved in some way through the suffering of the Incarnate, possesses an immense depth of appeal which is entirely lost to Hinduism.

For in this way the worship of Christ entails also the duty and privilege of the follower to be in this also as his Lord—to seek the lost, raise the oppressed, and suffer for the suffering. And it is important to see that in contact with Christian teaching some of the Hindu believers in an incarnate have recognised this lead, and have proposed to worship as the last avatar, for instance, a certain Hindu ascetic who did a good work during a laborious life among the sick and the lower castes. This arbitrary method of seeking for some one to embody a sense of need and a solution for it derived from elsewhere, instead of accepting Him in Whom the problem was found both set and answered originally, is one of the greatest testimonies to the defects of their ordinary faith.

For here as elsewhere we feel that the Hindu soul with its penetrating spirituality has left out half of the problem to be solved along with the main part of the solution. After all, for any religion the problem of evil is central, and it cannot be merely identified with the body and so shuffled off with it. And this must especially be the case for any religion which really believes in Incarnation. For such there can be no question as to the need of that solution being, in some sense, found in and through the body. Here Hinduism seems only to approach

a satisfactory statement as it approximates to, or borrows from, Christianity in its later phases. Whether the very idea of Incarnation was derived from the same source, we shall have to inquire separately.

Bibliography, Official Text-books (translated).—*Bhākti Sūtras*, etc., in *S.B.E.*; *Bhāgavad-gīta* (not Annie Besant); *Aphorisms of Sandilya* (Cowell). Best study as a whole in Hastings' *Encyc. of R. and E.*, article 'Bhākti-marga' (Grierson). Also 'Bhairagi,' etc., supplement with Hopkins's *Religions of India*; J. N. Farquhar, *A Primer of Hinduism*; *The Crown of Hinduism* (far the best book on the whole subject of Hinduism). For particular questions L. Barnett, *Bhāgavad-gīta* (in Temple Classics); R. Garbe, *Die Bhāgavad-gīta* (German translation with Introduction), and article on it in *Encyc. of R. and E.*, also *Die Samkhya-Philosophie*. G. A. Jacob, *Vedantasara, a Manual of Hindu Pantheism* (for Vedantism). *N.B.*—All Europeanised Hindus to be read (if at all) with great caution.

CHAPTER VI

BABI-BEHAISM

IN 1844 there appeared in Persia among the Shiites, or sectarian Mohammedans, a young Sayyed, or descendant of the Prophet, who announced his call to be the 'Bab,' or gate, to 'Him whom God should manifest.' This claim had a long, though interrupted, history behind it, and is closely bound up with the Shiah vein of belief which is found running parallel with the main form of Islam almost from its earliest origin. The last generally recognised bearer of the title Bab (there had been at least one unsuccessful claimant to it in the tenth century) had died almost exactly a Mohammedan millennium before such a 'voice crying' was again heard in this Mirza Mohammed Ali of Shiraz. Like his predecessors, he claimed to be the 'Gate' whereby communication was set up with the representative of God in the flesh. So in his twenty-fifth year this new Bab began to prophesy the speedy fulfilment of the Shiah hope for the coming of the Imam, as this divine personage had always been called in their circles. This was nothing less than a claim to be the forerunner of the Incarnate: for

according to the Shiah belief, as it had almost from the first existed concurrently with the main orthodox faith, God had actually in some sense come on earth as a man in the past and was so to come again.

In the form which this faith had taken in the state-religion of Persia, the soil from which the founder of the present movement sprang, it consisted of the belief in twelve Imams, or express revelations of God in a human person, starting with Ali the murdered nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet, and continuing successively from father to son. These divine persons were considered greater than the Prophet who was only their harbinger, and had all been the objects of passionate devotion on the part of their followers. They had all died by violence mostly at the hands of their orthodox persecutors, the best known being the sainted brothers Hassan and Husseyn, whose martyrdom all Mohammedans celebrate in the penitential Muharram. The last of the line, after completing the obsequies of his martyred father and predecessor, withdrew from the world in A.D. 873 (the two hundred and sixtieth year from the Hegira of Mohammed). For seventy years after this, according to Shiah belief, he kept up communication with the outer world through a series of Babs, or 'Gates.' This period is known as that of the 'Minor Occultation' (or lesser hiding), when the Master was half revealed and half concealed. When even this came to an end with the death of

the fourth of these Babs, the 'Major Occultation' (or complete hiding) began. This was expected to continue until the reappearance of another such 'Gate,' who should renew the 'Minor Occultation' and so prepare the way for the return of his Master—for the completely renewed revelation of the Hidden Imam.

But the Shiah hopes had remained unfulfilled for about a millennium, during which the Imam remained invisible, and no would-be forerunner had been able to establish his claim. The last Bab had died without leaving a successor, and no 'prophet like unto him' had arisen in the thousand long years afterwards. But all the time there was among the Shiites a confident hope, which rose at certain periods to such a pitch of expectation as to produce pretenders. This faith in some of its forms even maintained that the Imam was already present somewhere upon earth if only a 'Gate' could be found to lead the faithful to Him. Such is the background of Babism. It was out of the heart of these beliefs in the Imam and hopes of a Bab that this new prophet came. His claim to fulfil the one and bring near the fulfilment of the other met with a ready welcome in the same quarters, waking eager echoes in many longing hearts.

He had been preceded in Persia by signs that a powerful revival in Shiah circles was imminent. Their anxious anticipation of a Bab and the Imam to follow him was gathering strength. At last, as the

fourth decade of our nineteenth century drew to its close, and it was now already nearly a thousand Mohammedan years since the beginning of the 'Minor Occultation' as Shiites held, a sect called the Sheikhis (from the name of its leaders) arose, which preached the urgent need of preparation for the immediate advent of the Imam at the end of the millennium. These sectaries were the hot-bed of the new movement. It was from among those affected by their preaching that there came Mirza Mohammed Ali proclaiming himself to be the Bab, and therewith empowered to reopen the Minor Occultation of the Master. This divine personage (he preached) remained still hidden, but was now soon to be revealed in the human form of 'Him' (as yet unknown) 'whom God should manifest.' The evidence he advanced for this assertion we shall see later. As far as men could tell, he himself appears to have been at the time a man of little or no education, but great holiness of character.

It is very noticeable in the development, which thus culminates in the opening of a new history for the Shiah belief, that the driving force is a refusal to be content with anything less than the presence of God Himself really represented among the believers. No revelation given by the Prophet in the past and petrified in the Koran would satisfy their longing. Further, it is significant that, though pretenders to the position and prerogatives of the Bab had appeared before, they had never

received widespread allegiance. So, when there does appear such a successful claimant to the Babhood as Mirza Mohammed Ali eventually proved himself to be, we may expect that he should be something very remarkable. And indeed remarkable, so it appears, he was. Although the acceptance even of him was by no means universal among those who looked for the appearance of such an one as he claimed to be (so his further history will show), the early facts of his career are well worth study, especially from the psychological point of view. But before we turn to this a word or two must be said of another part of the background to the movement which has been hitherto left out of sight.

Besides the Shiah doctrine, which forms the main element in this development of the new Babism, we have to note another religious force which went to strengthen it—namely, the beliefs of the Sufis, the Quakers of Islam. All through the Shiah history, stronger at some periods and weaker at others, there runs an heretical subtone of this mystical pantheism. It is probable that it was largely influenced in its early growth by the influx of Neoplatonic thought. But it is also not unlikely that later Sufism in Persia owes much to contact with Hindu ideas. In any case, it certainly tended to develop a very non-Mohammedan quietism and to foster a view of the personalities both of God and Man which is quite foreign, not only to the native Persian robust-

ness of the old Parsee faith, but also to the far less emotional and more practical type of faith represented by Shiah orthodoxy in later Persia. It even degenerated into such frank atheism and immorality as that of Omar, Khayyam and the 'Assassins.'

It seems to have been partly as a renewal of the theistic factor drawn from Neoplatonism, in opposition to much decadent Sufism, that Babism won adherents from among the more devout members of that school. In any case it was, as we shall see subsequently, the presence of a strong Sufi tinge in the beliefs both of the Bab and his followers that facilitated the puzzling assumptions and transference of the spiritual headship in their community, besides providing some of the forms under which that headship was conceived. Mirza Mohammed Ali himself before his claim to Babhood appears to have represented in his external life and character the perfect type of Sufi saint, to whom almost divine reverence had always been paid. Such were the beliefs and expectations, Sufi as well as Shiah, out of which Babism arose.

The early progress of this new faith in Persia is extremely obscure, but it seems clear that the new Bab's personal character and powers were such as to win him adherents. Just exactly what were the features in them which produced the effect is not clear. As is usual when it is a question of the impression produced by a particular individuality, it is difficult to see the precise causes although the results are obvious.

The reasons assigned for their convictions by the early Babis are mainly, first, this Bab's power of producing verse at a rate, and of a character, which in an untutored man must obviously be inspired—the result of 'immediate knowledge'; and further, certain equations of the letters of his name and home, evaluated numerically, with the titles of the Bab. As a matter of fact, the verses, although (or because) he produced them at the rate sometimes of ten thousand in thirty-six hours (like Lucilius 'stans pede in uno'), seem to have been intolerably obscure, and in very bad Arabic, while the Cabalistic interpretations of numbers and names, though carried out in the fashion recognised by Persian tradition, seem to us at least very strained and unconvincing. It is therefore probable that the psychological reasons for the triumphant certainty of these new Babis must be sought rather in the generally acknowledged perfection of the Bab, as tried by Shiah-Sufi standards of ethics and spirituality, taken with the whole-hearted sincerity of his conviction as to his own calling and divine endowments. . These facts, fitting, as they did, perfectly into place with the eager expectations and soul-stirring longings of the Shiah tradition (which indeed would in turn account at least for the form of the Bab's own certainty), carried all before them among the more passionate and spiritual of those who had been prepared by the Sheikhi movement.

The convictions of those early converts were soon

strengthened by the elixir of persecution, which they had to endure from those who stood upon the old ways. This, too, was nothing new in Shiah history—like that of Israel, it was one long tale of prophets and saints slain or suffering from those both within and without. All the Imams, as we have said, were believed to have died by violence except the last, whose return was expected, not from beyond the grave, but from an Enoch-like state of translated life with God in one of the hidden cities, Jabulka or Jabulsa, whither he had been snatched away from evil days. Persecution had also been the lot of their followers, so that the devotion to all twelve of them (or rather to the One Imam, of whom they were all manifestations) had been founded and consummated in suffering. So the Babis, like the early Christians, could use the argument of past persecutions with almost compelling effect against the Sauls among their fellow Shiahhs. When to this is added the psychological reaction which follows where spiritual conviction is opposed by material force, and where suffering is believed to be a sign of election, the early and rapid expansion of the Babi community is intelligible, if not explained.

Their success was indeed amazing. The good news that the harbinger of the Coming One had appeared, spread like a fire among dry stubble. But—and here is the most curious point in the whole history—meanwhile the Bab, as he was supposed to be, appears gradually to have let it become

known among the inner circle of believers that he was himself also destined to be (indeed was already) the Imam—‘He whom God should manifest’—that Great One as whose prophet he had first appeared and spoken. This claim, strange as it may seem, appears to have been unhesitatingly accepted and maintained by all his followers until his death—with, however, the very significant exception of a period of silence when one of his followers, Hajji Mullah Mohammed Ali of Barfurush, known as Hazrat-i-Kuddus (His Holiness the Splendour), was recognised by the Bab¹ no less than by his followers as the Kāim, or expected Imam. When this personage fell in the persecution, the Imamate reverted to its first bearer, Mirza Mohammed Ali, who, during the period of Hazrat-i-Kuddus’ activity, had returned to his status of ‘Gate.’ After this temporary abdication, he continued the undisputed representative of God, one whose words and acts were alike in the fullest sense divine, until, in 1852, the harrying of the Babis culminated in the martyrdom of their leader—not, however, before he had designated his successor in the Imamate.

Here, with the death of the Founder, who was also the Fulfiller, the first period of the Babi history closes. It is this spring of the new faith which has

¹ To give him his original title, by which he is usually known. It is also appropriate in any case at this point, as it is the one which again describes his function during this interval, since he has resumed his former position as Bab to Hazrat-i-Kuddus.

for us the greatest importance as bearing the closest resemblance to Christian origins, as we shall point out later. But, in order to get the perspective correct, a short sketch of the more recent history of the sect is necessary, especially since it also presents illuminating points both of contact and contrast with the history of our own religion.

Mirza Yahya, whom the Bab had designated under the title of Subh-i-Ezel (=Morning of Eternity) as the next Imam, was universally accepted by the Babi Church, and the spread of their Gospel suffered little check from the substitution of the one person for the other. It rather appears to have gained impetus from the removal of the original representative of God, partly owing to the access of devotion excited by his martyrdom, and partly to the significant fact that at any rate among those surrounding the new Master there were better educated men of broader outlook. So strong did the sect become in Persia that the representatives of the established church and state there petitioned the Turkish Government to remove its chiefs from the too close proximity of Baghdad, just over the border, which had become the Antioch of the movement after the scattering of the great persecution. They were accordingly taken to Constantinople in 1862, and further transplanted to Adrianople in the following year.

It was here, in the stronghold on the banks of the Maritza, that there broke out the first of the great

schisms which mark Babi history. It rent the Church into two factions. The one still clung to Subh-i-Ezel; the other was headed by his elder brother, one Beha-ullah (=Light of God), who had long been the effective ruler of the sect owing to the retiring and mystical disposition of his deified relative. But Beha aspired higher. In this year (1863), probably after careful preparation within the Babi community, he came forward openly claiming himself to be 'He whom God should manifest,' and to supersede the revelation of both the Bab and Subh-i-Ezel. In making this assertion, as it is interesting to note, Beha was not traversing any received principles. He was only applying the admittedly transferable character of the Imamate to a new case. The possibility of this had already been acknowledged by the original Bab when he suffered himself to be temporarily eclipsed by Hazrat-i-Kuddus. So now Beha maintained that the 'sun of wisdom' had set in Subh-i-Ezel and risen again in himself—the 'Dawn of Eternity' had given place to the 'Light of God.' .

In this anti-conservative revolution, Beha was able to carry with him the great majority of the whole Babi Church, now scattered from Adrianople to Teheran. And this was only natural in any case, since the line of cleavage between the static and progressive elements in a new or renewed religion (such as Babism or Christianity) naturally leaves a preponderance of its adherents on the side of

expansion, if not of innovation. Beha thus became the second founder of the religion which now usually bears his name, and immediately initiated a modernisation or reinterpretation of its whole practice and faith in all their centres. At Adrianople itself, however, the contention was so sharp that the Turkish Government thought it wise to separate and secure the rival claimants. Subh-i-Ezel was therefore transported to Cyprus, under the supervision of five of the followers of Beha—while the latter was sent to Acre with a similar guard of Ezelis. The Behais proved their superior enterprise and fitness to survive by soon ridding their leader of his pickets, while maintaining themselves an effective blockade on Subh-i-Ezel. Beha therefore (subject still, however, to the varying stringency of Turkish supervision), continued to govern and propagate his sect from the strategic point of Acre. Subh-i-Ezel, on the other hand, in his island exile, was shut off from any effective control of his dwindling followers by the vigilance of his opponents as well as the inaccessibility of his habitat, although he continued to exercise a precarious influence by his writings. With the death of Beha in 1897, followed by that of Subh-i-Ezel about 1903, the second period of Babi-Behai history ends.

To carry the account down fully to to-day, mention should be made of the whole field of Behai activity which now stretches from Burma to North America. We are not, however, so much concerned with the

propaganda of this Diaspora or Catholic Behaism, which ceases to present such interesting features as its first form. Yet it is important to point out that the head of it, Abdul Beha or Abbas Effendi, the son of Beha-ullah, whom he designated as his successor, although he has carried the development further both within and outside the Church, makes for himself a merely Papal claim. He regards himself in theory as only maintaining the revelation of the Bab as fulfilled in his father. So his title (= 'Servant of Beha'), as well as his professions, indicate. In practice, however, it appears that the less educated Behais treat the three as a sort of Trinity of divine manifestation.

The opponents of Abbas' father, the Ezelis, are practically extinct, but a new opposition has arisen in the sect owing to the fact that, in spite of the explicit will of Beha, the more reactionary party among the Behais at his death supported the claims of Abbas's brother, Ahmed Ali. They were thus carrying out the principle which we have seen all through the history, that spiritual supremacy is not the inalienable right of a certain person, but only bestowed or withdrawn by divine fiat from time to time. The innovations of Beha and Abbas, and the reaction of the Behai propaganda abroad on its general beliefs, seem to have robbed it to-day of anything really distinctive, and it has apparently become, though perhaps the most living, yet only one, of the many theosophical mystical foundations

of modern times. It is its earlier characteristics which give it place and importance for any one interested in the history, psychology, and validity of incarnational religions. To a further examination of these we must now turn.

CHAPTER VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF BABI-BEHAISM

It is clear that, for the Christian student of comparative beliefs, the facts of this religious movement are of unique value and almost crucial significance as a test-case for his own beliefs in the Incarnation of God. There are obviously great similarities throughout the two religions, and, unless these are counterbalanced by equally striking contrasts, it will be found ultimately impossible to maintain that there is any great gulf fixed between Christianity and Babi-Behaism. An attempt must therefore be made to extricate as objectively as possible the points both of contact and divergence between their historical features. We may, however, note as a preliminary that it is in the furthest distance of their history that the approximation appears most close, and it seems (though perhaps only seems) to vanish as we proceed further.

- Both faiths took their rise in a strongly monotheistic religion which had developed and maintained through a long and chequered history a vivid hope for the coming of a divine being who should prove really and indeed 'God with us.' In both cases this

had given rise to certain premature projections of itself, but in neither had these managed to secure widespread adhesion or dynamic control. Both lines of expectation still turned back to the past of prophecy and faith as the basis for hope in the future justification of their longings. When at last, as their adherents came to believe, these were about to be fulfilled, we find in both streams a rising tide of assurance. At the height of this the Coming of the Expected Saviour is immediately preceded in each case by a swelling wave of religious revival, and ushered in by a prophet preaching the near advent and the need of readiness before the face of the Mightier One who is to be manifested. When that One appears, the faith in Him, received with joy by many and made good through suffering in a few, concentrates round their passionate acceptance of His unshaken, though dying, claim to be more than man.

Neither of these claimants is pre-eminent for learning or worldly position. Each draws authority rather from undoubted purity of character and sincerity of conviction. Miraculous acts in the case of the one play only the same part in calling forth faith as is taken in that of the other by miraculous utterances. With both the root of the matter is rather a personal impression made on men's hearts. This seems to have been so overwhelmingly powerful as to be incapable of being described in merely human terms. It demands the attribution to them of such divinity

as those persons themselves claim. But the event in Persia as well as in Judæa, so the believers witness, is opposed to any traditional anticipation of a Coming in unbroken triumph. And the central figure in both dramas expected it to be so, or at least those who believed in him saw afterwards that it must have been so. For this superhuman figure in each case is One by Whom (so all the evidence states) suffering was viewed as no accidental misfortune, but rather as an essential part of His divine mission. It is only in His death that the disciples find new life.

The outcome of this personal devotion to One who eventually dies at the hand of his enemies, is in both cases the faith that he survives and comes again. It is in the power of this certainty (in the one case still expected, in the other found fulfilled) that both bands of believers alike were able to go forward. Both gained through this the vitality to increase and consolidate the little body of faithful men and women into Churches in which there is no distinction between nationalities, between male and female, between bond and free, and so to initiate a forward movement which, while holding fast in the main to the original first principles of the founder, showed a remarkable faculty of adaptation to environment, combined with a real missionary enthusiasm.

In both developments there appears at an early date the same conflict between those elements on the one hand which wished to keep the revelation crystallised in its first form and leave the religion

a national sect, and those on the other which felt bound to universalise and unite it with Mediterranean civilisation. In each the more expansive views seem most in accord with the spirit of the Founder, since the seeds of a world religion can clearly be traced in the most primitive form of his doctrine. These are in both cases brought to full growth by one outstanding figure who, with all the advantages of the highest education and worldly position, succeeds in fully freeing the faith from its particularistic envelope, while not losing its positive character as a religion of humanity. This great personage still presents to faith a personal object of devotion—in the one case his Master, Who is to come again; in the other, that Master come again in Himself.

With this end of the apostolic period the striking resemblances seem to cease. The question, however, may well be asked whether a contemporary student of the Christian Church during the first two centuries would not have thought that Church far astray from the ideas of its founder, and deeply corrupted with others derived from those among whom it preached, just as the modern Behaism under Abbas Effendi seems to us careless of its origin and history and soaked in notions and methods which are foreign to its genius. In both cases, perhaps, there would be many still true to their first love. But we do not yet see it in Behaism. Whether it carries in its heart, as Christianity did,

a power which will remould the world in the spirit of its founder, the future alone can show. For us at present its earlier period offers more complete material for comparison as well as more critical points of interest.

It will be well to deal first with the supreme question as to the characteristic views of each about the divine-human person around which they centre. It is this which forms the determining factor and symptom in the whole range of the religious ideas of both, and other points may come in as supplementary to this, although it will of course be impossible to deal completely even with such a vital point. If, however, it can be shown that the natures attributed to this personal object of devotion in the two religions present striking and crucial differences, it will be clear that there can be no case for bracketing the two and making them so identical as to stand or fall together. But especially at first sight the indubitable piety and sincerity of the Bab would seem to make his claim to divinity all the more puzzling. The old alternative as to Christ of 'either God or not a good man' seems invalidated by these facts. But the question really is whether the *kind* of divinity claimed by the Bab is the same as that assumed by our Lord. If not, the alternative may still hold, though in a less absolute form. And here it is important to notice that the historical sequence of events, apart from any doctrine, brings out some clear distinctions.

Firstly, the successful claim of the Babi baptist (if one may call him so after the fashion of many who wish to emphasise the similarity) to be himself their Christ shows that, for him and his followers, the one character could pass into the other. This not only did not occur in the Christian development, but was not even regarded as conceivable. The question asked of John the Baptizer and about him was whether he was Christ or Elias. For the Jewish contemporaries of John and Jesus, the prophetic and the Messianic were two totally distinct persons and agencies, the one inspired, the other divine. Nor is the fact that Jesus was originally recognised as the Prophet of Nazareth anything but a proof of this. For it is clear that Peter's Messianic confession implies that this view of His person had been a mistake all along and not (as with the Bab) true for the time, but discarded. And there is no trace that Jesus ever accepted the character of mere prophet, much less proclaimed Himself as such. The 'sign of Jonas' is given in the preaching of John the Baptist. It is he who comes as Elias. Jesus at no time in His ministry of which we have any evidence announces Himself as the forerunner of one who in the end proves to be Himself—and this is precisely what the Bab did.

A further consideration of the fact supports this view. The self-consciousness of Jesus, as revealed in the account of His own temptation before the beginning of His public life, is already quite clear

as to His endowment with Messianic, and not merely prophetic, prerogatives. The only growth which can even be supposed in His inner realisation of Himself, subsequent to that time, is growth in understanding of what the Messianic character implied. The Bab, on the other hand, at the outset clearly supposed himself to be the prophet of that person whom he ultimately claimed to be. This is very intelligible psychologically, but does not correspond at all to the clear distinction which in the mind of our Lord and His disciples (after they accepted His claim) was always maintained between His person and all others. The Messianic consciousness was never regarded by them as a mere heightening of the prophetic, or as possibly growing out of, or passing into, it. But this was the Bab's view. For we have to remember that, besides having started as a prophet, he also reverted to the merely prophetic status for a time, according to the conviction both of himself and his followers. The alternation of the two characters in the same person is as foreign to Christ's thought as it is essential to the Bab's.

Secondly, as a historical fact this goes with the view of that character as not inherent in a person but transferable like a cloak. The Bab, even in the period of his latest claims as Imam, regarded his office and prerogatives as taken over by one recipient during his life, and continuing in another after his death. This means that for him they did

not depend on personal and inalienable characteristics but on divine endowment from time to time by arbitrary election. We have already seen that this view of the Imamate was fully accepted and applied in all the history of the religion. Hence it appeared that at two different periods there were co-existent two persons, one of whom was universally acknowledged to *have* been the Imam, but at least widely supposed to have ceded that position to the other. Now this clearly implies a view of the Imamate which is quite opposed to the Christian thought of the Messiahship; the one is a function and office, the other is a personal figure. It comes to this: In the case of the Babis, God is conceived as manifested through a human medium, not as really *become* man—the personality is not himself God, but an instrument of revelation in the flesh. No real union between God and man in one person is thought of as accomplished, or even as possible.

A third feature of the history illustrates this most clearly, viz. the double fact that the early Babi books are *by* the Bab and not *about* him. His main function and self-evidence was the production of inspired writing. It was thus he revealed his creative power. This idea is in full accordance with the general Mohammedan belief that the Prophet was manifested by his book, which was itself a fully authenticated transcript of the divine revelation laid up in heaven. For the early Christians,

on the other hand, their Master was not primarily the producer even of divine sayings; much less of writings; but His whole character and action revealed in His life and death were the showing forth of God. This was the reason why it seemed to them of prime importance that a reliable description of the person of their Master should exist—and the earliest Christian traditions are all about Him. Further, as contrasted with the detailed and intimate portrait given in these reminiscences, the fragmentary and incidental accounts of the Bab are meagre and colourless. And this fact too makes manifest the comparatively small significance that was attributed by the early Babis to the acts and passion, and even dying, of the person as a climax of revelation, compared with the sayings and writings which came through Him.

We may perhaps state the fact in a few words as follows. The bearer of the Imamate is not so much a living person with fully characterised individuality as a lay figure with a detachable halo of divinity. This is quite clearly not the point of view of the earliest, or indeed of any, Christians. For them, unless Jesus was verily and indeed the Word-made-flesh, unless Jesus and the Christ were one and the same Person, Who as such was of unique and transcendent significance—He was nothing at all. But for the Babis, Mirza Mohammed Ali and later Beha were indeed theophanies of the Logos, but only in so far as they were not themselves.

The divine and the human were separable, and the latter therefore lacked actuality for them.

This conclusion comes out still more clearly when we come to consider the doctrine. Here we find a double strain of beliefs (as to the relation of God and man), corresponding to the Shiah and the Sufi sources on which they respectively draw. The Shiah shows, in agreement with the orthodox Mohammedan belief, a deistic view which sunders God from man and the world, making Him manifest Himself only through chosen intermediaries who receive divine election and enabling power. The Sufi, on the other hand, with their pantheistic tendencies drawing on Neoplatonic mysticism, are inclined to see in any special human excellence the direct and sufficient presence of the Divine. Both might obviously coincide in indicating the Bab as the bearer of spiritual characteristics which marked him out from other men. But, whereas for the Sufi these were valuable for their own sakes as manifestations, for the Shiah they would only be indications of the presence of a prophet or an Imam. Of such persons (unlike the Sufi saints) there could only be one in activity at the same time. It seems true that, while the Sufi reverence for the divine teacher and saint prepared a ready recognition of the Bab's qualities, it was the Shiah apocalypticism which gave the standard interpretation of this and provided the driving power to make it effective.

Such were the origins of the Babi doctrine as to

the persons of the Imam and the Bab. Both seem to combine, though with the Shiah predominant, in representing the revelation of God in a human person under the terms of the reflection of light. This is the common Babi way of putting it, for, although the light is only reflected, the reflection is still light. All men in their degree were called upon to be such reflectors, but the Bab fulfilled this calling perfectly. The eternal light mirrored in the calm depths of the saintly soul is a common idea. Under this form the Sufi and the Shiah could both unite to recognise it when it appeared. But the Shiah obviously preponderates when that reflection in any particular person is regarded as anything, even temporarily, unique. It is in any case the marking out, so to speak, of this one point, as the exact luminous spot at which for the moment the lightning of God touches the earth of man, that constitutes the peculiarity of the Babi belief.

But here one should notice in contrast with the Christian view that this does not prevent the 'point of revelation' ('*nukta*' a Babi term for the Imam) being shifted, and makes the appearance of the flash the only and sufficient evidence for such refraction. When it reappears elsewhere it is the light of the same sun seeming to rise in a different mirror. And further, it is obvious that the very idea of merely reflected light, as applied to the unique revealer, contradicts the Christian belief in Christ as the very Light Himself, which lighteth (by reflection) every man as he

cometh into the world. The Imam is thought of as shining like the moon, while Christ is for the Christians the very photosphere of the Sun Himself. It is true indeed that the Imam idea enabled the naturally static Mohammedanism to take on the colours of a dynamic evolution, but only at the cost of losing all claim to conclusive perfection. The allegorical interpretation by the Babis of all Scriptures (Old Testament, New Testament, and Koran) which assume such finality for their revelation proves their consciousness of having abandoned any such position.

It is in accord with this when we find the Bayan (the early body of Babi writings) denying the possibility of any divine incarnation by which God could in a real sense become man. The only reality is the divine ray, which can never really unite with mortal clay. In common with all religions whose monotheism tends to deism, the greatness and holiness of God is guarded in Mohammedanism by setting an impassable barrier between the divine and the human. As against the levelling pantheism of Sufi tendencies, this protest of orthodox belief is clearly right, but when carried through against any and every idea of union it really eviscerates even the possibility of communion and stultifies revelation. God becomes something so entirely other than man that any real touch with Him is quite impossible. It was no doubt this exaggeration against which Sufism was a reaction. But

neither it nor Shiah beliefs attained an understanding of personality deep enough to solve the problem, and for this reason Babism too failed to lay sufficient stress on the real possibility of incarnation. We may of course attribute this weakness to various reasons, such as the stagnant and static character of the Arabian tribes among whom the Prophet's ideas first formed themselves. But, whatever the cause, there can be no doubt as to the resultant unreality of the Babi Imamate, if regarded as a frame for the divine coming among men.

It is this inability to believe in the full union of the divine and human in one person which gives its transitory character to the Imamate. The single Imam is not thought of as possessing any claim to finality—the same sun rises in all the mirrors of his light, but they are not final bearers of it. The uniqueness of each is explicitly said by the Babis to be only temporary and for his own cycle of time. No works can avail to save a man without knowledge of the Imam of his time, but that Imam will not suffice for the ensuing generations, and, through the times of darkness when there is no open vision of him, men can only live by memory and hope. It is clear that this last weakness is of extreme practical importance. For even if past Imams, as being really the same as the undiscovered Imam of the present, are thought of with devotion, the failure, which we have noticed already, to preserve any representation of them, as apart from their words, causes great

doubt among their devotees even as to 'what Spirit they are of.'

All this may be said without going further into the doctrine of God in its Shiah and Sufi forms and their combination and development in Babi-Behaism, for which there is no space here. Perhaps enough has been said to show the differences between this way of thinking and Christianity, and beyond that the whole subject possesses only a historical interest. How far the similarities extend we have seen. Whether any of these depend in their origin on contact, direct or indirect, with Christianity itself we shall have to inquire later.

Bibliography.—Comte A. Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, chap. vi. to xii. E. G. Browne, *The Tārīkh-i-Jadīd, or New History of Mīrzā Ālī Muḥammad the Bāb*; *A Traveller's Narrative, written to illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*; *Encyc. of R. and E.*, art. 'Bāb, Bābis,' and other works, especially *A Year among the Persians*. H. Römer, *Die Bābi-Behai*. Edinburgh World Missionary Conference *Report, Commission IV., Appendix*. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, chap. v. D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory*. N.B.—All British and American propagandist literature very unreliable.

CHAPTER VIII

HELLENISM

IN the Mediterranean world on which Christianity entered after the Crucifixion of its Founder, it was not the first religion whose votaries preached the death and resurrection of an Incarnate Saviour. Nor were the Nazarenes in those days the first to make the figure of an historical Master the object of a passionate devotion and gratitude, and even perhaps to find in his continual, though unseen, presence with them the rallying-point for a living community life. Others had gone before them in these directions. It is worth while to call attention to such anticipations of things Christian in the field on which Christianity found itself, partly because too much is being made of them at the present time by those who do not know enough of the general history of religion to give them their proper place, but still more because some, at any rate, of them did prepare the way for Catholic Christianity and even influenced the forms, at least, into which its experience crystallised.

Let us take first the less important, but perhaps

more interesting, of these features of pre-Christian Hellenism—the grateful adherence to an actual teacher, even after his death, as an enlightener who had brought deliverance. The experience which we know as ‘conversion,’ that more or less sudden illumination and relief from distress, which comes psychologically with a shifting of outlook and purpose towards the ultimate things of life, seems to have been a not uncommon phenomenon in Hellenic (if not in strictly Greek) civilisation. We can observe traces of such an upheaval and reconstitution of the landscape in many of the great thinkers and poets among the Greeks and Romans. Some of them have left us records of their sense of new possessions. Æschylus *e.g.* felt the clouds had broken for him alone, and this made him a prophet and gave passion to the preaching of his solitary faith in the ultimate justice of things.¹ Probably the clearest and most important case of this is that of the philosopher Heraclitus. Of him it is recorded that he passed through a stage when ‘he knew nothing,’ but he certainly emerged from it with truly triumphant certainty. So, having seized the key to the secrets of the universe, he preached with complete contempt of all other doctrine, and even rejoiced to repel would-be disciples. His famous *Logos* doctrine, contained in the single copy of his book, he consecrated in the Temple of Artemis as a monument

¹ Cf. the *Prometheus Vinculus* or *Agamemnon*, *e.g.* ll. 175 and 757, where he affirms his belief in the value of suffering as his own creed.

of divine revelation, careless of all except it and its origin.

Now, whether indebted to contemporary Hindu teaching or not, Heraclitus, as far as we know, acknowledged no debt to any human teacher, and most of the great Greeks were, like him, rather inclined, when they received saving enlightenment, to emphasise their independence of human tuition, and to make acknowledgment, if at all, to the gods alone. But it is obvious that, when a religious value becomes attributed to the enlightenment received through philosophy, the possibility also arises with it that any one who receives this from a particular author of teaching may regard that master as someone really superhuman. The parallels to such a grateful deification outside the Hellenic world in Sikhism *e.g.* are numerous, and they tend to connect with the old forms of faith in 'possession' (seizure by spirits), which are found at their crudest in Shamanism.¹ In the case of Heraclitus himself we find traces of veneration approaching worship on the part of some followers, which was encouraged as much as checked by his stern aloofness; it was only held back by the obscurity of his teaching, which prevented them from receiving through it the full sense of freedom that true conversion gives.

But in the case of another great teacher in the Outland of Greece we find a much more complete

¹ On Shamanism, E. Lehmann, *Mysticism in Heathendom and Christendom*, chap. i. On Sikhism, Römer *op. cit.*, Appendix II.

recognition of his divine character and a more thorough acceptance of his claim on men's grateful veneration. For such is the Pythagorean attitude towards the enigmatic figure of Pythagoras. We need not inquire into the very vexed question of his teaching, though it is important to notice that it was what we should call more distinctly religious than 'the 'rationalism' of the Ionians, being in the full stream of the 'mystic tradition.' But the feeling of his disciples towards him, probably during his life and certainly after his death, was a deep awe and reverence as of a supernatural power. This was so great as to make them refrain from publishing anything in their own names since all was due to the Master's inspiration. They referred to Pythagoras as 'He,' 'Him,'¹ and perhaps supposed that in some sense his spirit, or dæmon, lived on in the community, in which (it would seem) his famous doctrine of transmigration might lead them to suppose that he was still embodied. Such a reconstruction, if not too imaginative to be true, appears by no means unimportant for our purpose, since the Pythagorean community is the nearest analogy presented in the Mediterranean world to the phenomenon of the Christian Church. But this whole range of thought is really much more parallel to its contemporaries, the Buddhist doctrines of the Buddha and Sangha, with which we have

¹ F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, especially pp. 201-203, a suggestive but unsound account.

already dealt. In Pythagoreanism, no less than in Buddhism, we have evidence tending to show that, where the religious strain was strong, the personal attitude towards a teacher might develop many of the marks of worship, based on gratitude for his doctrine which had brought release. It might even come to survive his death and to apotheosise his spirit. There are slight signs of similar phenomena in the pupils of other great teachers, especially perhaps in the 'Pythagorean' Plato and inner circle of Socratics after the martyrdom of their master.¹

But we must pass on to another case in some ways different but seemingly at root the same from a psychological point of view—that of some at least of the followers of Epicurus in relation to their teacher. Here we fortunately possess first-hand evidence through intimate knowledge of one who was his disciple—the great Latin philosopher, poet, and almost prophet, Lucretius. The acquaintance which he gives us with his mind in his work on the *Nature of Things* lets us see clear traces (especially at the beginning of the Third Book) of a great experience of release.² This he had found through reading 'the golden sayings from the pages' of his 'glorious sire.' These, 'welling up from that divine mind,' had scattered 'the terrors of the soul,' and

¹ A. E. Taylor, *Varia Socratica*, of which what is sound is well summarised in Prof. Burnet's Introduction to the *Phædo*.

² W. Warde Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*, (pp. 361 and 375-6), who cites *Die Bekehrung im klassischen Altertum*, by W. A. Heidel, which I have been unable to consult.

now, he says, 'I follow thee, O glory of the Grecian race, not eager to rival but for love, because I would be like thee!' And all the way through the poem we have a recurrent refrain of grateful admiration, of which Virgil's famous reference¹ to Epicurus is only a pale, depersonalised echo. He is clearly regarded by Lucretius as the bringer of enlightenment and peace to harassed souls, and so occupies in affectionate and reverent remembrance somewhat the same place as has been assigned in the great historical religions to their founders. This is all the more interesting and important because the teaching of Epicurus was, as far as the ordinary definitions extended, completely irreligious and almost immoral, and it was for freedom from many conventional fears and forms, in belief and practice, that his disciples were especially grateful to him.

Epicurus' doctrine of a mechanically constructed universe and a judicious pursuit of contentment cleared the air for Lucretius of many haunting possibilities, and put him at home in an at least not unfriendly scheme of things. This shows, it would seem, that the great sense of a glorious liberation, which we find in the conversion-experiences of all true religion, consists at least partially in the striking off of old fetters so as to set men upon their feet in a safe world. What kind of power is sufficient to accomplish this must, it would seem, depend upon

¹ Contrast 'Happy was he who . . .' (*Georg.* II. 490) with 'A god was he, a god who . . .' (*Lucr.* v. 8).

the strength and nature of the bonds, and in any case the mere breaking of them can only give a sense of release to those who have been bound.¹ But for that purpose, apparently, the main thing required is not so much an ultimately satisfying doctrine as one good enough to act as a solvent for the particular restrictions. Yet even that alone would not be sufficient. To such powder there must be added from the depths of some volcanic nature the explosive spark of personal conviction and character to set the charge to work. And in this connection it is important to notice that the personality of Epicurus as shown in his letters, especially the last written in the pain of his deathbed, seems to have been of very unusual force. In it, too, his relations with his disciples seem of the most intimate personal nature. For we find him in this farewell epistle leaving them instructions for the celebration of a common meal after his death in memory of himself and Metrodorus, his favourite pupil.

The importance of these facts, which approach in some places very close to Christian experience, has been pointed out in connection with the very similar case of early Buddhism—they only re-emphasise it on the same *terrain*, and about the same time as Christianity itself. Such traits seem all to show the same thing—in them we find already reverberating certain notes and chords in the human soul which were those on which the Chris-

¹ See for a fuller treatment of this question pp. 45 and *seq.*

tian revelation improvised its great harmony, giving them all full place and use.

The other characteristic of religion in the Hellenic world of which we must take notice was more widespread, although perhaps not so typical. It is found in the great variety of mystery-religions which centre round the death, and life from the dead, of a redeemer god. Here it is extremely important to distinguish the features which are, and those which are not, found before the Christian era, since when these religions came into contact with Christianity, they began to approximate much more closely to it than before.

The origin of all these strains of belief seems to have lain in the worship of the dying and reviving god of nature, who in autumn languishes and passes away only to find fresh life in spring. Of this type the Syrian Thammuz is the earliest, plainest, and most famous instance. And he is typical of a number of similar versions of the same theme, *e.g.* Adonis. The lamentations for him which preceded his return made it doubly joyous, and those who rejoiced in his resurrection found in nature the same joy. Of course this celebration of Thammuz is only one of many devotions for his worshippers and can hardly be said to imply any sort of monotheism, or even monolatry.

But there were other forms of the same religious impulse which quite early seem to have occupied so large a place in the mind of their devotees as to

become practically a religion concerned with only one god, while not involving denial of the existence of others. Of these the most important for our purposes are the Thracian worship of the wine-god Dionysus Zagreus, which was early imported into Greece, and the indigenous mysteries of Demeter at Eleusis. In both of these the focus of attention is again the restoration to life of a divine person, in the one case Dionysus killed and eaten by the Titans, in the other Persephone stolen by Pluto, the Lord of Hades. The worships differ, however, in type, being enthusiastic to the point of orgy in the first case, but solemnly dramatic in the second. Yet in both of them there is found the idea and practice of initiation, which is accompanied by a deep sense of the liberating revelation received through knowledge of the returned divinity.

We do not, however, find any close parallel to Christianity until we come to the later, but still pre-Christian, mysteries of Egyptian and Phrygian origin, those of Hermes and Isis and of Attis and Cybele, which prepared the way for Mithraism, the great rival of Christianity as a mystic religion. In the worship of Cybele, the great mother, and her dying companion Attis, the rite of initiation is a baptism in bull's blood. This *taurobolion* was, later still, the great counterfeit which the early Fathers found taken from Cybele by Mithras, and opposed to the Christian washing. In such sacramental mysticism, too, we find a passionate faith which

carried this Phrygian cult of the 'Great Mother' as far as Rome earlier than any such religion with the possible exception of the Dionysiac. In Egypt also (although here our evidence is later, probably post-Christian) Isis, as well as Serapis and others, is worshipped as Saviour. Along with her dead but living husband Osiris and her son Horus, she has become goddess of death and life. Both she and Hermes seem to have been the objects of a devotion which has become the sole concern of their adherents, since Isis is addressed as the 'One, who art All,' and Hermes Trismegistus as 'thou that alone art, and art thrice one' ¹

In connection with all these mysteries, inscriptions make it probable that the initiate was described as 'born anew,' 'reborn into eternity.' As in later Mithraism, the neophytes all appear to have felt that they had received in this way a security and liberty never known to them before. The actual evils from which they are freed they think of in various ways. For some it is the power of evil spirits and demons, for others the fatal sway of the stars in their courses, and for all the body and the fear of death. In them and in a few philosophers alone, do we seem to find a sense of relief and almost of happiness in that sad world where the fully conscious soul of later Hellenism found itself. The means by which this state of soul is reached is mostly supposed to

¹ The evidence for this can be found at its shortest in Reitzenstein, *vide* Bibliography, but his conclusions need sifting.

be the communication of saving knowledge. This appears often in what seem to us grotesque forms. In later gnosticism, for instance, the names of the demons, who guard the gates of the various heavens through which the soul will have to ascend after death, were imparted to the initiate as passports to be used when the soul has to face their owners in its upward ascent from the earth.¹ •

There was at the time when Christians first invaded the Greco-Roman world a general diffusion of these mystic religions, owing to the close connection of all parts of the Roman Empire by the movement of commerce and troops, and it seems to have been accompanied by a wide currency given to various forms of devotional and other literature connected with cults. The evidence of inscriptions is more plentiful for later times and for the more outlying parts of the Roman Empire, but it is quite probable that St. Paul would have met these ways of thought in the great central cities of the Empire. There can be little doubt that the general familiarity of such ideas and practices had helped to create in certain quarters a ready demand and acceptance for the mystic sides of Christianity, just as the propaganda of the Jewish dispersion had prepared the ground in other respects.

But, however much Mysticism there was originally

¹ E. Bevan, 'Paganism and Christianity,' *Quarterly Review*, July 1911, on *Pistis Sophia*, which no doubt embodied earlier material in a Christianised gnosticism.

in Christianity, it seems clear that it was not at first formulated as a Mystery at all. Into whatever forms it afterwards became translated out of the primitive Jewish-Christian shape of apocalyptic beliefs, it was a matter of translation, not of assimilation. So the fact that the Christian experience was interpreted into terms which were already current does not prove that its essential features were derived from the same source as theirs. We shall see in a later chapter how very different was the original Christian outlook from that of the mysteries. But even when translated into mystic forms, it still remained distinct. As a matter of fact it is very possible to see certain marks, even in the later Christianity as expressed in such terms, which are not present even in embryo in the preceding religions. And on the other side, these earlier religions are also characterised by certain general and specific qualities which Christianity omits. The distinctive Christian features are sufficiently dealt with in the later chapter, where the marks of Christian devotion, so far as they are opposed to all other incarnational beliefs, are partially defined. Here, out of the characteristics of these pagan faiths, we may notice a few important points without exhausting the sum of those rejected.

First, the general character of the mysteries is what may be classed as 'gnōstic'; that is, they lay emphasis, in the first place, on the saving power of *knowledge*. This is clearly contrasted with the Christian

appeal to all the powers of man's personality. It is only when Christianity is untrue to its character that it resembles Paganism in this. The semi-heathen gnosticism, with which orthodoxy fought such a desperate fight in the first and second centuries, did indeed approximate to the mysteries in this respect, but that was only because the gnostics *were* mystics, who were trying to make the Christian merely one of themselves.

Secondly, the body was regarded as incurably evil. Such a dualism implies (as was the fact) that morality received very little attention in the mysteries. Very often the perfect mystic was supposed (as in modern Theosophy) to possess a spiritual insight which absolved him from the ordinary ethical limitations. But the typical Christian mind has never even conceived such an idea. Characteristically, for St. Paul's view, the highest grade of Christian initiate is the *spiritual* man. Such an one was never the mere 'gnostic,' but above all a man of complete moral development. It is significant that the very term 'spiritual' is never found¹ used to describe a religious type, until Christian influence has been at work for a generation at least.

A third mark of paganism follows from this. In the wider sphere of the corporate life none of the mystery-religions had the many-sided vitality needed to form a real religious community, world-

¹ Reitzenstein entirely fails to prove his point here, since, as usual, he ignores the Septuagint.

wide, race-free, and expansive. For that the unique Christian virtue of love was required as the bond of union and life among the 'brethren. The very word with which they described it (*ἀγάπη*) was new. It was this characteristic that struck even the outsider. 'They so loved one another' was the fact to the Romans that made the Christians a 'third race' in the world. It was this which built up the universal community, the 'Great Church,' and enabled it in the end to form a 'soul' capable of conserving all that was good in the dying body of Mediterranean civilisation at that epoch.

And finally all life was consciously drawn by the Christian community from the Spirit of One Who, as they believed, so loved the world that He *came down* to earth and died *under Pontius Pilate*. In the figures of the 'pagan Christs' in contrast with His, one may notice here two points out of many. First, they made no serious claim to be historical; their worshippers did not even interest themselves in the question of when or how they died. It did not strike them as a question of anything but mythology. Even if it had done so, there was, of course, no evidence available that any persons corresponding to the stories of Osiris or Mithras ever existed. Indeed, as far as concerns the latter, it seems highly probable that his cult, which developed alongside of Christianity, borrowed certain features from the historical Christ. In any case, the Mithraist never experienced the need that, if the whole thing was to

be true, there must be some strong proof to contradict its very improbable appearance. Such a craving for assurance by solid fact does not seem ever to have made itself felt in pagan souls, or, if it was felt, the materials to meet it were entirely wanting. And secondly, there is no evidence¹ that in the pre-Christian mysteries there was any thought corresponding to the idea of Christ *coming down* to save the world—that is, being with God before, and out of pity descending to suffer. Of course when this sense is not present, though it is possible to have an incarnate Saviour, he is not a true incarnation, since, for any monotheistic belief, God can only “become man by a process which can be so described, and any divine being who is man without it must be less than fully God. And this comes out in the notions allied to it. The idea of ‘divine man,’ for instance, which we find quite commonly in Hellenism, is only a sort of pantheistic turn of phrase for prophet. The incarnate is not truly *the* Incarnation.

These remarks are all that space allows, and perhaps are as much as the importance of the subject requires. To sum up, we may say that in Hellenism we find a statement of the need, but no serious or satisfying attempt to meet it. It is interesting, and even important, to see how that world, which was the nursery of Christianity

¹ An examination by E. Bevan of this in the *Hibbert Journal*, October 1912, is quite negative in result.

as we know it, had already felt the need of incarnational religion and even anticipated some of its features. The evidence, however, appears conclusive that in the pre-Christian *milieu* of the Mediterranean such anticipations of Christianity are subordinate in importance and suggestiveness to those which we have seen elsewhere. To the further study of these, then, we must now return.

Bibliography.—ON CONVERSION, ~~IN CLASSICAL TIMES.~~—J. Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, chaps. x. and xi. PYTHAGORAS ETC.—F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*. EPICURUS (LUCRETIUS).—W. Warde Fowler, *Religious Experience of the Roman People*. MYSTERIES.—F. Cumont, *Les Religions Orientales dans le Paganisme Romain*; E. Rohde, *Psyche*; J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to Greek Religion*; G. Murray, *Four Stages of Greek Religion*; Toutain, *Les Cultes Païens*, vol. ii. RELATIONS WITH CHRISTIANITY.—R. Reitzenstein, *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien-religionen*; A. Jacopy, *Die antiken Mysterien-religionen und das Christentum*; Carl Clemen, *Der Einfluss der Mysterien-religionen auf das älteste Christentum*; H. Böhlig, *Die Geistes-kultur von Tarsos im Augusteischen Zeitalter*; E. Bevan in *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1912, on 'The Gnostic Redeemer,' and in *Quarterly Review*, July 1910, on 'Paganism and Christianity'; K. Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*.

CHAPTER IX

HISTORICAL CONNECTION WITH CHRISTIANITY

WE have tried to trace three main lines of development among non-Christian beliefs in Incarnation:—

(1) *Buddhist*, where a reverence for the human Light-Bringer, who had lit the path from the garish day to the peace of darkness, was finally transfigured into an ardent faith in God, the first and the last, Who had come down to save mankind and would receive the suppliant soul into everlasting felicity: (2) *Hindu*, in which the devotion to special *non-incarnate* divinities had fused with an attachment to human heroes, into the worship of one of the forms of a monistic deity in his incarnations—personal figures standing up from a quasi-personal foreground with an impersonal All behind: then finally (3) *Shiah*, that strain in Mohammedanism which had refused to regard the crystallised revelation of Mohammed as final, and looked for, and found, further manifestations of the Divine through a series of human media, reaching crucial expression in its latest rebirth through Babi-Behaism.

We have now to try and estimate how far, if at all—especially in their developed forms—these were

not entirely non-Christian, but, at least in part, actually Christian in origin and content.

(1) With regard to *Buddhism*, as it develops into its latest form, there can be little said with certainty, since the cloud which overhangs the most crucial points of its inner history is still, and will probably long remain, unlifted. We do not know, for instance, how far Gautama himself, whose clan seem to have been more or less newcomers in India, had contact with anything outside. We have seen no reason in his doctrine to presuppose anything but Indian antecedents. On the other hand, about the time of his birth Cyrus took Babylon and extended his empire up to the Indus, at least, and, no doubt, made all the spiritual riches of Mesopotamia accessible, at any rate as far as the Punjab. But this possibility of connection with the stream of Semitic life and thought is of small importance, since Sakhya-muni seems to have incorporated little or nothing which could claim such origin.

A much more important question from the standpoint of the general history of thought (if not of religion) may be asked with regard to the effect of Alexander's invasions and the general contact of Hellenism with India. So far as it is possible to judge, this influence was not great, at any rate where Buddhism is concerned. Ashoka, the great Emperor of the next generation but one after Alexander, although his grandfather had entered into marriage relations with Seleucus and received Greek ambassa-

dors at his court, and he himself was in communication with the West, yet shows few signs of being affected by Hellenic influence. In any case there can hardly be any question of his connection with the Jewish line of religious thought, since the primary tenets of his Buddhist creed seem to have been a scrupulous kindness to men and animals and a belief in the future life—neither of which was distinctive of Judaism at the time.

When we come to post-Christian times, there is more of importance. At Peshawar, in the middle of the first century A.D., there reigned a partially hellenised king, Gundaphorus. He is connected by legend with St. Thomas, who is said to have been sold to him as a carpenter, and we know from an inscription that he employed an architect from the Mediterranean. At any rate, in his kingdom there arose the school of Greco-Indian art which produced the first images of the Buddha, and these are, interestingly enough, always clothed in Greek costumes. This, however, proves nothing more than the representation of Melanesian gods in Western top-hats. But the fact is sufficient to imply the likelihood that anything causing a stir in the Roman Empire would find an echo in Buddhist circles during that period.

It was in this century also, and again in connection with the north-west of India, that the Mahayanist faith took definite form. The great teacher, Ashvagoshā, to whom this was largely due, wrote his work

The Awakening of Faith, in which he gives utterance to his belief in salvation through Amida, either in the Punjab or after an enforced stay there. This debatable frontier-land was the point of contact between India and the West, and any wandering apostles or evangelists, such as St. Thomas is supposed to have been, would have entered the Indian world at that corner. No conclusions can be reached with any approach to certainty. But the new direction given to Buddhism at this time and in this environment is so curiously suggestive of Western influence¹ that the possibility, or even probability, of such early Christian preaching in that quarter, as the legends assert to have taken place, can be no more excluded than proved.

Ashvagosha's successor, Nagarjuna, carried his doctrine of faith still further. With regard to the appearances of the Buddha on the earth, he held a view which cannot be distinguished from the semi-Christian theory maintained by his earlier contemporaries, the so-called 'Docetists,' in such places on the Mediterranean as Alexandria. They too held that the Saviour's appearance was mere seeming. These heretics were prevalent all over the Roman Empire, but especially in the University cities, of which the great Greco-Egyptian foundation on the Delta was almost the metropolis. Besides forming a great emporium, Alexandria, as a main centre of

¹ Amitabha even receives the title of 'Lord of the Western Paradise.'

culture in the Greco-Roman world of the time, would have also distributed religious ideas. And since we know that during this century there was an active traffic between Alexandria and the coast of India,¹ there seems no reason why the merchantmen should have purveyed nothing but 'ivory, and apes, and peacocks.'

Later on, too, it was at Alexandria that the various so-called 'gnostic' schools had their chief home, as the natural successors of Docetism, their first forerunner. They all attempted to combine a sort of syncretistic philosophy with motives first drawn from Christianity, and then treated in a way which made the assimilation of and to other religions especially easy and attractive. So it seems fairly certain that besides any export of Catholic (and later of Nestorian) Christianity to India, there must have been during these centuries a considerable trade in gnostic ideas which eventually became translated into Sanskrit and acclimatised in South India.

When this had taken place, the result was carried further. There is some probability that this semi-Christianity was eventually transported in its Sanskrit shape by sea to China, and there formed the staple of a new line of Buddhist thought. And it was this which, when carried across to Japan in the ninth century, there gave rise to the Shingon sect, which is

¹ Pseudo-Strabo, *Periplus*. For later trade, *Cosmas Indicopleustes*.

the most popular representative of Buddhism in that country to-day. The complete evidence for this is too complicated to retail, but the possibility of the well-known gnostic passwords, Abraxas and Kaulacau, in Japan, would alone be a most suggestive chance. Also a gnostic tract, the *Pistis Sophia*, still extant in Coptic form, resembles the first chapter of the great scripture, the Hokekyo.¹ From these and other signs, it seems not unlikely that Gnostic Christianity had a hand in the evolution of Buddhism in China and Japan down to the end of the first millennium after Christ.

Meanwhile Christianity had already reached China also, without touching India. It arrived there by the transcontinental route, following hard on the heels of Jewish trade. In the immediately pre-Christian centuries we find a colony of Jews exporting silks at Kaifongfu, in West China. They were imbued with a hope for the 'great-one-descending man,' and to them at the end of the caravan-way must have come the earliest representatives of the faith that proclaimed its fulfilment. But the chief preachers of belief in Christ that came to China were the Nestorians, who, even before their condemnation at Ephesus in 431 A.D., had sent out strong missions to the East. After their expulsion from the Roman Empire, their numbers swelled, and finally, with the rise of Mohammedanism in their original homes, the

¹ Saddharma Pundarika Sutta. For all this see Lloyd, *vide* Bibliography, and *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. xxxviii. part iii. (Dahlmann, also his *Die Thomaslegende*).

main body of them took refuge in Central and Eastern Asia. We have the best possible evidence of their power and popularity in China through an inscription at Si-An-Fu, which gives an account of their faith and works during the last quarter of the eighth century. These worshippers of Christ were in close and not unfriendly contact with Buddhism, so that we find a Syriac-Nestorian deacon co-operating with an Indian Buddhist missionary in translating into Chinese a Persian work on the cardinal virtues. What this must have meant for the corruption of the Christian faith as well as the fortification of such Buddhism with elements taken from it, we can only guess.

On the whole, then, we may say that, while we are unable to trace the process in detail, the infiltration of Christian elements (especially drawn from unorthodox or gnostic versions) into later Buddhism is certain. It is unsafe, however, to assume dependence wherever resemblance appears, even though such direct relations are not at all inconceivable. But in any case two outstanding facts remain on either side. On the one hand, religious thought was much more fluid all across Asia than we are liable to suppose, since it was not until the progressive drying up of the Central-Asian plateau and the destructive action of Mohammedan crusades that the great trans-continental thoroughfares were closed. On the other hand, it is important not to forget that pre-Christian Buddhism had already developed an

element of what may be called Messianic expectation in its belief on Maitreya.

(2) *Hindu Bhakti* towards avatars, or rather towards Vishnu, as known through such incarnations, can hardly be said in its later forms to be independent of Christian beliefs. The following remarks may serve as a slight summary of the evidence. Most of the actual points of contact are disputed, but the high probability of some such relation between the two cannot be denied as a whole.

Whatever be said of the earlier legends about St. Thomas, which we have mentioned in connection with Buddhist development, there is considerable probability that Christianity was well established on the Malabar coast by 200 A.D. It had probably come thither by way of the coast-wise *sea-trade* between South India and Egypt, but it seems very likely that it had also already reached Northern India, where the Kushan Empire was in immediate contact with the West, by the *overland* route. If so, the same line of traffic would have carried it south along the west coast, since there is evidence for its continuation in that direction. We have, however, no clear testimony to this at present, although it is possible inscriptions might yet be found giving it.

At the end of the sixth century, however, a Persian cross at Kottayam testifies to the presence of a considerable Christian community in that neighbourhood. This was still in existence, as a

second cross indicates, in the eighth century. We know, also, that there was a Christian bishop of Syriac extraction at Kalyana in the sixth century A.D. There is no need to mention again the facts already stated with regard to unorthodox strains of Christianity in India. But its main body of pre-Moslem Christians seems, so far as our evidence reaches at all clearly, to have been an offshoot of the Nestorians and, although in modern times they became dependent on the Syrian Jacobites, they were for all their earlier history in close relations with the Nestorian world outside. This was owing, presumably, to the maintenance of connection with the great Church of Persia by way of the sea, although the possibility of help coming to them along the land trade-route still remained open. In any case, it seems clear that Christian ideas were widely diffused at any rate in South India during the first millennium of our era.

After that, however, these Christians in India were cut off from the West by the rise of Mohammedanism with its mass of fanaticism thrown across the line of connection. In South-Western India the Syrian Christians have maintained a precarious existence up to the present day, although, as it were, in a state of paralysis, produced by the severance from the main body. But, in the other centres, the rise of the later Bhakti, which presented so many similarities to their own faith, combining with the increasing corruption entailed by their

isolation, caused them to disappear as a distinct religion. In the neighbourhood of Travancore, however, Christianity continued to exist as a caste alongside of Hinduism, and has even begun to grow out of its mediæval slumber again in our own day. In any case, it was in South India that Christianity seems to have been strongest in the Middle Ages.

It was in the south, too, as we have seen, that about the time of the final eviction of Buddhism from India there appeared the forerunners of the great Bhakti revival in mediæval Hinduism. We have also noted that these prophets, Ramanuja and Madhva, had, quite possibly, been brought up within the circle of strong Christian influence—the one at Conjeeveram near St. Thomé, an old centre of Indian Christianity, the other at Kalyana, which we have mentioned above in connection with a Christian bishopric. In any case, the movement which they initiated (especially as represented by their spiritual descendant, Ramananda, the Luther of this Reformation) bears such strong resemblances to certain features of Christian belief that direct connection is at least the simplest explanation.

But the question is complicated by another possibility. With Kabir, the disciple of Ramananda, there enters into Hindu religion an element of *Mohammedan* mysticism. This, however, had its main issue in the Sikh religion as founded by Nanak, the spiritual son of Kabir. And, further,

the fact that it was the passionate personal devotion to an Incarnate which distinguishes the new from the old proves that the revival cannot have been Moslem in origin. The only element in Islam which could have given rise to such a strain of religion was, as we have seen, the Shiah; and Kabir came, it would seem, of the Sufi stock. So the Incarnational element can hardly have been Mohammedan.

For the same reason, however, it can hardly have been purely Hindu. The flaming Bhakti of the new day is so unlike the pale rays which glimmered before its dawn in India that one can only suppose the main source of its light and heat to have been, if not wholly foreign, at least not wholly native. There seems no other explanation of its sudden rise as a triumphant novelty in the settled, though seething, world of Hinduism except the intrusion of some more or less alien force. And when we consider the nature of the new movement with its concentration on (if not introduction of) such incarnational devotion, it is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that its motive power was probably Christian in origin.

On the other hand, it may well be asked why such an effect should, in that case, not have been produced long before. If Christianity had been domiciled in India for a millennium, and had not until then succeeded in causing even such an indirect, although powerful, result, it might be natural to seek

for some other origin for this Bhakti altogether. But we have to remember that until this time Hinduism had never been left to itself, and any influence exerted by Christianity had probably been in the direction of Buddhism rather than of its enemy, orthodox Brahmanism. As we have seen, the effect on Buddhist thought was probably very powerful, and its opponents would tend to discount anything which was in favour among their competitors.

And, further, there is probably a deeper reason for this delay, lying in the constitution of the human mind as it acts in societies. For some reason (probably owing to the stagnant condition of Catholicism, which had become too deeply entangled in the ideas and institutions of the Greco-Roman world), Christianity, as presented to Hindus in the first millennium, had not been able to win for itself the adherence of the general spirit of India. The instrument needed to accomplish this was a native version of the faith, and this the converts were prevented from originating by the strong Western shell, encased in which their religion had come to them. The only possibility, therefore, for the time, was a movement *outside* organised Christianity which should take some of its elements and make a fusion of them with a Hindu basis. Now, the little that is known of the way the mind of peoples works, suggests that it would take at least this length of time for a native movement to

produce itself on these partially foreign lines.¹ A thousand years are but as one day for this purpose.

So it would appear that this Bhakti revival in Hinduism might quite well be the tardy effect of Christian influence long and steadily exerted. In that case it seems probable that Christian feeling had only gradually percolated into the Hindu spirit, and there, as it sank in, finally effected a chemical mixture, so to speak, with native elements. This would be all the easier to understand if it had only coalesced in proportion as the local Christianity itself had become increasingly corrupted, and so was more easily assimilated. Probably an almost exact parallel, if we could trace the details, would be provided by the later developments of Buddhism in connection with a 'down-grade' Nestorianism in China. But, in any case, the fact that such reaction was delayed in India cannot discount the character of the force which would have been needed to produce it—and this would clearly be something very like Christianity.

This question of the original force in the Bhakti revival is the main problem as to Christian influence in it. But however first derived, there are in the present state of Hinduism, as inherited from the time before modern missions, many Christian-like traits. It can at least be proved, for instance, that the ritual for Krishna's birthday is drawn largely from Christian sources, since it differs from the

¹ Le Bon, *Psychology of Peoples*, chap. ii.

early Hindu stories precisely in the points where it approximates to the account of Christ's Nativity. It is highly probable that devotion to the child Krishna is mainly dependent on the similar Catholic attachment to the Child Christ. For, although it appears more or less certain that the divinity of infancy is a native idea in India,¹ the divinity of childhood is obviously a different thing, and the clearest antecedents of this are in the Christian gospels. In them the Lukan story of the Child among the doctors represents the outcome in Christian devotion to Christ of the Master's own attitude towards children, whose 'angels always behold the face of the Father.' But this reverence for child-innocence and trust is quite another thing from the glorification of puberty which we find in the worship of the youth Krishna, which, often immoral as it is in story and practice, has no counterpart in Christianity. Here we seem to see that the higher sides of such veneration may have contact with Christianity while the baser cannot. But this and other such points which might be added are of minor import, even though they show a wide diffusion of some Christian knowledge.

The result of this sketch of the historical connection between India and Christian ideas has been rather to show possibilities than to prove certainties. In some cases the possibility attains to a high degree

¹ I am told, *e.g.*, that the baby sucking its thumb is a well-known symbol of deity in Tamil poetry.

of probability—such, indeed, as would be considered sufficient for purposes of proof if the subject did not touch on important issues and engage religious and racial loyalties on the one side or the other. It is perhaps possible to affirm, even in the face of such dangers, that a dispassionate judgment is bound to admit some such connection. The amount and importance of this, however, remains, and probably must remain, a matter of argument and personal appreciation of evidence. But it is more or less safe to say that complete independence can hardly be claimed for Indian faith even by a convinced nationalist. If he possesses a fair acquaintance with history, he is bound to recognise that modern Hindu Bhakti is not untouched by Christianity altogether. Indeed, sober judges such as Professor Hopkins (and probably Mr. Grierson) maintain that the real worship of India is now directed towards an almost unknown Christ. Whether this is true or not, however, it is important on the other side to realise that such worship would not be existent at all in India to-day if it were not for the native trend of the Indian spirit itself in the same direction.

(3) The question of the *Shiah* element in Islam is an even more complicated and less soluble problem. Its dependence on Christianity in its final outcome as Behaism to-day is not here so much in dispute. When Beha and his lieutenants came to modernise and propagate their sect in the Mediterranean world

and farther afield, they naturally took over much from those to whom they wished to recommend it. And a study of Behaism in its different developments in Christian countries to-day (especially in America) would seem to suggest that it was nothing but a Unitarian theosophy, and had only a subordinate connection with the Moslem East. But, as we have seen, such importance as the movement possesses for our study is in connection with its earlier form and its rise through Babism from the Persian Shī'ah. And it is the relation between this and Christianity which we shall have to investigate here. All that can be said about it might be put in a few words, so far as certainty extends.

The Shī'ah is, as has been pointed out, an unorthodox sect of Mohammedanism, thus inheriting much that was contained in the original forms of that religion. And here we have to remember that the Prophet himself was not independent of Christ. As we see in the Koran, he had picked up considerable fragments of Christian tradition, and had related his own ideas to them, and had even borrowed, whole and unaltered, certain elements from Christian belief. In this connection it is especially remarkable that his teaching actually expected Jesus to return to judge the world—just in the fashion, although not on the principles, proclaimed by the Catholic creeds. So, when the Shī'ah looked forward to the reappearance of the Imam Mahdi and identified him with Jesus, they were not parting company with either Mohammedan

or Christian tradition. And, although this is the most striking point of agreement, orthodox Moslem beliefs as a whole contain a considerable quantity of orthodox Christian ideas.

Further, Christianity had been well represented in the very birthplace of Mohammedanism, and all the country which Islam conquered outside its original home had been sown thick with Christian churches, and its peoples were, by the time of the Hegira, steeped in Christian ideas. But it is with Persia especially that we are concerned. Here, owing to the fact that the early Imams combined, by marriage into the ancient ruling house of the 'Achæmenids,* both the national and the religious claim, the Shiah early made their home and established their orthodoxy. And it was in Persia too, as we see from the strong influence exerted by its missions all over Asia, that Christianity had been especially alive, although, by the time of this sect, in corrupt forms which facilitated amalgamation. It would not be surprising, then, if the survival at least of Christian *needs* should make itself felt.

So for both these reasons, the written and the spiritual tradition, we are bound to affirm that in its earlier course this line of development had some contact with Christian sources. In the composite stock of ideas and emotions, which went to make up the Persian Shiah religion, there must have been at least strains of direct Christian inheritance.

Whatever be true of the Shiah religion, as a whole,

is also true of the Bab. But if Mirza Mohammed Ali was the son of the Shiah, he was also at least the nephew of Sufism. The latter, with its esoteric mysticism, did not draw for its origin on any Western sources, as far as we know, except Neoplatonism; and, although it is not impossible that a certain Christian colouring may have been present in some forms of it (such as we see most complete in the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite), it is improbable that this amounted to very much. At the same time, the Sufi thought early effected a synthesis of all the Scriptures. The Old Testament (recognised also by orthodox Islam), the New Testament and the Koran all had for the true mystic the same purport. But this equalising of their claims could hardly bring out the most distinctive features of the Gospel. We cannot, however, forget that at least one great Sufi writer, Jelâlu-'ddin, was in close contact with Christians while studying at Iconium (from which he was known as Rumi, or the Greek). But he does not show any very distinct lines of Christian thought, at least on Incarnation. So it is to the Shiah connections of Babism that we must look for the chief source of any Christian influence distinguishable in it.

As we have seen, the Shiah were considerably tinged with what was at least possibly Christian in origin, although distant from its source. Here we can trace at least one important idea (that of the Return of the Imam=Jesus) as derived from Chris-

tian tradition. But it is not likely that the Bab, or his immediate predecessors, the Sheikhis, had been within at all easy reach of any but such indirect Christian influences. Persia, before the middle of last century, belonged to the Middle Ages of Moslem dominion. Communications were bad, the population fanatical, and the government strongly reactionary. Moreover all Turkey in Europe, Asia, and Africa lay around it to guard against Western intrusion. Hence neither Christian missionaries nor their literature are likely to have penetrated so far. But there is one important exception to this. The Bab had access to the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) available in Henry Martyn's translation, published at his own native place, Shiraz, in 1811, and a large amount of his literary activity was expended on the allegorical interpretation of parts of it along with the Koran. So, then, we may conclude that the relationship of Babism to Christianity is through tradition and scripture rather than through contemporary persons and propaganda.

The result of our inquiry may be put in this way. It seems highly probable that the presence of Christian ideas in the Bab's mind was real, although largely unconscious. Whether he devoted direct study to what he calls 'the Syrian Gospel' as well as the 'Hebrew Pentateuch' and 'Mohammed's Koran,' we have no means of deciding, but the amount of floating material drawn from it, which was widely current in the Persian Shiah of his day, makes a

certain measure of dependence on it indubitable. The presence of sects with some Christian colouring of a rather Gnostic type all through the Nearer East, both before and after the rise of Islam, helps to explain the general situation, while the direct equation of the Old Testament, New Testament, and Koran by the Suñis has an important bearing on the Bab's attitude. At the same time, it does not seem likely that all these influences together would have been sufficient to produce the very close similarities which we have noticed without the presence of an internal force driving in the same direction; they could hardly have been produced merely by external pressure.

If we try to summarise whatever conclusions can be drawn from these facts as to the relations between the Christian line of development and these other religions which claim to be incarnational, the result must be inconclusive but suggestive. The historical data which are available seem to make it likely that in all these three forms of belief, Buddhist, Hindu, and Shiah, some Christian influence was at work as they expanded into their final form, and in their final form they approach most nearly to Christian ideas. But there does not seem sufficient reason to suppose that in any of the three, with the possible exception of Hindu Bhakti, this definitely Christian motive power was at all overmastering. It seems clear, at least, that the result, as we see it

in them, could not have been produced by that outside influence alone. Their great growth and characteristic forms were rather the outcome of a fusion between Christian influence and certain immanent tendencies of their own which pointed in the same general direction. These were, no doubt, reinforced and partially directed by the presence of Christian ideas (whether implanted in them later from outside or inherited with their own life from the first), which coalesced with certain inner requirements native to the genius of these other religions themselves.

We may put the case in the following way. It is as though a process of cross-breeding had been made possible by strains of similarity, and the offspring differed from both of the parent stocks but would have been impossible without their conjunction. If this is so, it becomes possible to draw from the history two tentative conclusions: firstly, that the final form of these religions was influenced by Christian tendencies received in various ways; but, secondly, that this influence would have remained ineffective except for one fact: it there found, already active in these lines of religious development, certain innate aspirations towards the same end. These two conclusions are important, as we shall see in the next chapter. Here we need only note that the second is all the more obvious since, as will appear even more later on, the forms, which this belief assumed in the three lines of non-Chris-

tian evolution, are strongly differentiated from the Christian belief in divine Incarnation. They could not have arisen more than very partially from it, and the full Christian faith is something far greater, which they still only know by flashes of intuition. Their worth we now try to estimate.

Bibliography.—Besides books under particular headings in previous chapters, see, for Buddhism, especially Lloyd, *Creed of Half-Jen*; Shinran and his Work; *Gnosticism in Japan* (East and West, 1910); 'A Sutra in Greek' (*T.A.S.J.*, vol. xxxviii.); a useful summary of these by R. W. Pringle in *Church Quarterly*, Jan. 1913, who quotes Gordon, *Messiah, the Ancestral Hope of all the Ages*; Georg Faber, *Buddhistische und Neutestamentliche Erzählungen*, who cites Dahlmann, *Die Thomaslegende*; Rudolf Otto, *Parallelisms in the Development of Religion, East and West* (*T.A.S.J.*, vol. xl.); Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ed. Bury (vol. v. Appendix 6, Si-An-Fu): for Hinduism, Hopkins, *India, Old and New*, G. M. Rae, *The Syrian Church in India*, Richards, *Indian Christians of S. Thomas*, and Whitehouse, *Lingerings of Light in a Dark Land*; also Dahlmann, etc. (above): for Shiah, Goldziher, *Neutestamentliche Elemente in der Traditionslitteratur des Islam*.

CHAPTER X

THE VALUE OF NON-CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

OUR study of the facts of non-Christian religions was concluded in Chapter VIII. In the last chapter we considered the traces of historical connection between Christianity and these other veins of belief in an Incarnation. We shall now attempt to discover the value and significance which can be assigned to them. For any religion which claims to be the final faith of humanity it is of extreme importance to be able to assign a place and purpose to all the beliefs which it is bound to regard as at best partial and temporary. The present chapter is written with a view to suggesting how an absolute religion could appreciate the relative truth and falsehood of those which it claims to supersede.

This inquiry will assume the result of the former chapters. From them it has appeared more or less certain that the non-Christian faiths which we have been studying are clearly distinguishable from Christian belief in an incarnation. Not only were they different in certain general features, but they appear to have lacked certain characteristics which in Christianity itself (whether it is true or not) have been a source of strength, and to have manifested

certain practical weaknesses from which Christianity is free. Of course, these general observations only apply to the average, the most typical forms of the religions: they deal with tendencies rather than with individual instances; but they seem to hold good as far as they go.

Further, it will be necessary in this chapter to anticipate to some extent the conclusions of a later chapter as to the existence in Christian devotion to the Incarnate of unique marks, which will be defined presently. These have already been hinted at in the implied contrast with the other religions in each case, but can only be, and may be, posited in outline here. The present attempt to estimate the other faiths will consequently be an effort to show what worth can be attributed to them from the standpoint that Christianity has at least the best claims to be a unique example of incarnational religion.

In the last chapter we concluded, on a basis of the more detailed evidence given in connection with each religion, that the line of development in all of them ran, even independently of Christian-influence, generally in the direction of some sort of faith in Divine Incarnation. In three great streams of spiritual life we saw reason to suppose that there might be present waters drawn from Christian tributaries, but the fresh supply seemed not to have done more than increase the force and confirm the

direction of their main volume, which was, in any case, flowing towards such an outlet. Untouched by Christianity, or at least only partially influenced by it, they would have arrived at the same (or at least at a similar) destination. It is true that in all three cases the arrival occurred later than in Christianity, so that we could not exclude the possibility of a much greater infiltration of Christian influence; but this hypothesis was so unverified that we were bound to discard it for practical purposes. If, then, a purely Christian origin is ruled out, we must presume at least partial independence but general agreement. We must believe that these other types of human faith had all come to express the same great spiritual want, and had all reached in outline the same belief as to what would satisfy it. Such a threefold chain of evidence for the *felt need* of an Incarnation constitutes a fact of the greatest significance.

From this more or less fixed point, then, we may start our estimate. Probably we may say that wherever the sense of personality was sufficiently developed, man's great demand was for some perfect union of the divine and human in one person. It was this urgent want that drove religion at its highest to seek the way out through a belief in God's Incarnation. Since this attempt to resolve the greatest problems of human consciousness appears universally wherever the realisation of them was most acute, it seems to represent the inevitable effort to answer

a most fundamental demand. The final escape from this pressing necessity could only be accomplished through the faith that God had indeed become Man in some real way, so that devotion to the Incarnate might provide men with a real approach to God and a real right to deify humanity. Only thus could the aspirations of man after God find their complete expression and fulfilment.

Now, if this be true, it explains the subjective basis for such a belief. Men felt that only if the truth were so could they be content. But the fact of these longings cannot, as such, assure us of their satisfaction through the reality of that which they demand. It does, however, provide a certain presumption that somehow, unless the human spirit at its deepest is out of touch with the actual nature of the universe, they are not without a corresponding object, and in some similar wants there can be no doubt as to the existence of that for which they look. For there are other instances of such human *needs* coming to expression and obtaining satisfaction. This will come out if we consider such parallel cases as we can find.

George Tyrrell, I think, speaks somewhere of these facts of feeling as 'exigencies' in human nature, which come into consciousness and seek realisation. His example is the religious exigency, that felt need for God which has been generally experienced by mankind, and the necessity which it presupposes of finding something to meet it. It is, however, possible

to deny that this particular need possesses such a solution as it seeks. But there are other instances of this same principle where the same double fact comes out more clearly and where no one will deny the existence of either the demand or the answering reality. The most obvious cases are in the sphere of human affection. We may take 'the maiden's dream of children, and the young man's dream of a maid'—in prose, the maternal and the matrimonial instincts. Here, at least, it is possible to trace an exact correspondence between the need, or 'exigency,' which is experienced on the one side, and the facts providing the satisfaction which it postulates on the other. In these cases the one only anticipates the other: the answer does exist as a real possibility.

With regard to the relation between the object and the need, we may be sure that this feeling of want would exist, although in a blind state, even without the knowledge that it has ever been, or could ever be, satisfied; and, further, that it would recognise its fulfilment, if its object were unexpectedly presented to it. This means that these instincts are not merely products of 'social suggestion': the evidence of their satisfaction *follows* its desirability. A man would no less really, although more dimly, desire a helpmeet, if he had been brought up by goats on a desert island; nor, in a similar case, would a woman's need of children be any weaker because she felt, but did not see, its object.

• On the other hand, in ordinary circumstances this

'exigency' is trained and the object of it is defined by means of the knowledge, which is conveyed through the society, as to where satisfaction is to be found. And the same may be said to hold good, at least in part, of men's religion. The whole history of religious evolution may be viewed as man's training in discovering the end and directing towards it that impulse which he feels within. Every gain in such knowledge is stored up in the social tradition and handed on to each new generation as a help towards the attainment of that reality in which the individual's innate needs may be fulfilled. So it is as maps indicating the road to 'the place where they would be' that the religious deposits of past ages serve the present.

Applying this principle to the case under consideration, it is legitimate to suppose that man has an inherent hunger which is only satiable by the reality of Divine Incarnation. If so, the whole progress towards such a belief must be the gradual clarification of this longing, which gains definiteness as other solutions are tried and fail, and this, or something like it, alone seems to express the real desire. But such a process does not guarantee the aspiration to be more than the work of imagination. It is, however, possible to see from the analogies we have taken that it would be in accord with the operations of the human spirit in other spheres if some corresponding object existed in the case of religion.

But further, if this correspondence entirely failed

at this point, it would be difficult (if not impossible) to justify the rationality of a universe with which man was so out of joint. For he would be incurably estranged from it if anything so fundamental to him subjectively were non-existent objectively in it. No doubt it is, in theory, conceivable that this whole 'exigency' is an hallucination on a large scale, but, as history seems to prove, it is, in that case, one that has grown, and grown to gigantic proportions. Yet in all cases of desires, which we recognise as clearly insane, their failure to find satisfaction causes them to die out, since the steady pressure of reality eliminates them. Wants for things which do not exist cease in course of time to be felt and die out by inanition. But, in the case we are considering, such a decay not only does not occur, but rather we find a continuous expansion both of extent and of force in this exigency. It becomes more definite and more imperative as the ages go on. Such a fact, if the world is rational at all (that is, does in any real sense correspond to man's ideas), must imply something in reality answering to this demand made of it.

Such a conclusion is all the more inevitable if we suppose that man's whole conscious life is conditioned throughout by forces which he does not make and cannot alter. In such a state of things, at least in the long run, any victorious faith must conquer only because it is at least truer than its opponents. So in this case, without examining anything except the

continuous growth of such beliefs, we may maintain that such a universal exigency must be adapted to find a place in relation to real things. If the spirit of man is moulded at every turn by contact with facts which are independent of him, he could not have developed (or, at any rate, maintained) such beliefs unless they possessed a solid basis in facts, and were at least more adequate, as an interpretation of the facts, than those ideas which he discarded in their favour. Consequently, if we attribute little freedom to man, his felt need can only be explained by the existence of its object, while, if he is completely free, the converging testimony seems all the more decisive.

The strength of this argument is only increased if we think that all the different forms of this belief were completely independent of each other. If the Buddhist, Hindu, Shiah, and Christian all arrived at more or less the same faith, it would, in any case, be a very curious and important fact. But it becomes significant when this agreement goes with a generally superior level of existence (judged even by a purely material standard) among the holders of this common belief. They represent culturally, even if not religiously, a higher type. Their faith in Divine Incarnation is the spiritual product of comparatively civilised peoples. The further man advances in his general development the more essential does this idea become to his religious life. In the more primitive forms of human society (and

in their survivals to-day) the worship of heroes and saints, prophets, priests, and sages is an incomplete manifestation of the same tendency. But, whether independently or by interaction, the later religions rise to a supreme confidence that the One God of all can become, somehow; Man, and, as known in human form, be the object of a truly spiritual devotion and the satisfaction of all the longings of mankind.

We may, then, claim for our conclusion that there is on these general grounds a fair degree of probability for it. This continued and heightened expectation implies its satisfaction somehow, somewhere. The crying out of man's heart for such a consummation would never have been heard, or would never have continued to be heard, unless it had been at least partially able to be satisfied all the time.

So far perhaps we may value all those religions as witnessing to the reality not only of their need but of its satisfaction. But with regard to all of them it is important to notice that this does not in general mean more than the *existence* of an answer to the cry. Just as the desire of the childless for children, for example, or of the unmarried for the completion of marriage, does, indeed, point to a real object but does not imply that it is already attained; so, in the argument from the constancy of the desire to the necessity of supposing an object, we have been careful not to imply more than the *possibility* of finding its satisfaction. Indeed, it is clear from the

account which we have given of the historical facts that none of these religions can claim actually to have found their object in the way they suppose. The Buddhas and the Hindu avatars in the developed faiths are not historical personages, and so have no claim to be considered as really satisfying the need, and the Imams were only partially conceived as actual incarnations at all. Christianity alone has a tenable claim to present a Person Who can fully meet the need by the fact of Himself. Whether He does so or not we shall have later to consider; though not indeed to pronounce.

These facts make it clear that any testimony borne can ultimately only be to Christianity. So, then, our estimate of the value of these other religions makes it, perhaps, parallel to the meaning we assign to other expressions of the deepest human longings which *may* be fulfilled, whether they are so or not in the particular cases. What in other religions is a hope, an ideal, a dream, must be held to find its fulfilment, reality, and substance, if at all, in the fact of Christ. The satisfaction of their longing, if it truly takes place, must be due to the actuality of its object elsewhere. In Christianity alone, if anywhere, can be found the solid reality without which they (as well as it) would have no validity at all.

At the same time we must recognise that the case of religious experience is a special one, since communion with God is not limited by space. If, indeed, there be such an answering object as we

have seen reason to suppose, the expressions of longing for it, even when misdirected, are not destined to remain empty imaginations. In this respect the case of other human 'exigencies' is not really analogous. For, although children and marriage are real possibilities corresponding to the desire for them, there are in this sphere many cases in which the desire and its object never meet. But when the consummation sought is not a particular human relationship but contact with the living God, then, if the nature of God is such as the longing soul believes, He must be universally accessible to those who seek Him under that form. If God really be incarnate, all those who look to Him as such approach Him as He is, and must somehow find Him. If Christ really was God Incarnate, then all desire for an incarnation finds its satisfaction in Him. So far as non-Christian ideas of the Incarnation were true to Him, they would be real in Him, and belief in them would put men into contact with God through Him.

If, then, men 'rightly believed in the Incarnation,' their approximation to what such a belief implies in faith and practice must actually have brought them near to God in Christ and let them find rest in Him. According to the Christian faith, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,' and all who may be, and are, reconciled to God through a right faith in the Incarnate, must be so only through that fact—if it be a fact. If such men come to know and return

God's love at all through the forms of belief in other Incarnations, it must be because He really was so present and revealed in Jesus Christ, and it was through this reality in Him that they found such access. Just so any theist is bound to believe that the whole-hearted idolater, so far as his faith and practice is really spiritual, must through them find God. And the Christian must suppose that an honest loyalty to any sectional communion puts a man into relation with the universal society of God.

But, on the other hand, when once such believers in an Incarnation have lost their simple faith in the reality of it under the form which they knew, it can only be restored by the discovery of one who has more claim to be really God and man. When they have discovered that their devotion has been misdirected, they can only recover conviction by finding the true direction for it. This is the reason why Christians preach Jesus Christ. They believe that His person is the only true ground which can sustain such a faith, and that without Him all the other beliefs vanish as dreams in the morning. Yet, if He be indeed very God, the scattered fragments of His revelation, which are found on the high places of the world's religions, must be held to be sacraments of this 'Unknown God'—such that men may through them eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, although not in remembrance of His death.¹

¹ If He is the Light that lighteth every man, in Christian terms we may say that the two ideas, 'the Word that spake through

If this view possesses any truth, we may sum up our estimate of the meaning and value of non-Christian beliefs in a divine incarnation by a return to the parallel of other human exigencies. Love-poetry would obviously be a sign of lunacy, an absurd aberration, without the possibility of real beings to whom it could be addressed. The repetition of such a phenomenon on an extended scale, and still more any increase in the frequency and intensity of its recurrence, would argue a radical flaw in the reaction of the human mind towards the universe. Similarly, the continuous appearance and heightening of beliefs in a divine incarnation would be a sign of widespread disease in the spirit of man, unless the object which it demands were somehow actually existent. The more universal its occurrence, the less rational man would appear. His only justification must be a real fact somewhere, corresponding to his supposed intuition.

But, as we have seen in studying the main forms of this faith, the worship of the Buddhas, the Avatars, and the Imams was concerned rather with religious imaginations than historical facts. So we can only take belief in them as an expression of longing, the fulfilment of which was real but did not lie where they supposed. It is like the child's all the prophets' and 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' would provide the terms for stating this. They had contact with Him Who was *both* from eternity and destined to be Incarnate, without the knowledge of the Word as 'made flesh' and the Lamb 'as in these last times made known,' which were the necessary manifestations in time of the non-temporal realities.

passionate mothering of her doll in which the maternal instinct finds a temporary satisfaction. This is both real and unreal, and, although sufficient for the time, must be ultimately outgrown if the need is really to be satisfied. Otherwise the continuation of such substitutes would become pathetically unsubstantial, like the devotion of the childless for pet animals.

As were the Messianic beliefs of Judaism, so non-Christian religions of an incarnation are statements of a question with tentative proposals of an answer rather than any self-sufficient presentations of fact. As a blind man approaches the fire without seeing it, guiding himself solely by the increase in his sensation of warmth, so these non-Christians were groping their way towards God, led by their hearts burning within them more and more as they drew near to Him as man. 'If haply they might find Him' in human form, then their feeling after Him would have attained its goal—but not otherwise. And there must, as we have said, be at least a good hope of their doing so. For unless religion has no correspondence with reality, its culmination in these directions cannot be void of significance. All the Messianic strains in the history of the world cannot be destined to mere frustration.

If, however, this growing confidence of all the ages is to be fulfilled (and, indeed, has been already), all falls into its place. God could only come as incarnate in answer to such a need which, without Him,

would have remained unsatisfied. Or rather, such beliefs in Him could only be stirred by the fact that all the time He was such a person. If God really so loved the world, He must give His only-begotten Son to come on earth. Otherwise, He would not be such a God as man needed—or they would not have needed such a God. If He really in any sense came on earth, all these beliefs would be the preparation for His reception there. .

But it is plain that, with the possible exception of Christ, ~~his~~ human figure had actually appeared in whom God had fulfilled what these 'prisoners of hope' expected of Him. And yet, if God did really appear on earth in the form of Jesus, they were not wrong in their faith. In that case all those who died in looking for His dawn, or whose belief was that His dayspring *had* appeared, were not wholly doomed to deception and disappointment. For, although He was not where they looked for Him, yet behind the clouds He awaited them, and by their faith they saw Him as He was.

But neither was He quite such as they expected, either in Himself or as incarnate. For here we must note a point of contrast between the non-Christian line of development and the Jewish. Whether a divine incarnation actually took place in Palestine or not, the Hebrew hope did not project itself prematurely. The Jewish tradition kept their Messiah non-incarnate until One came who had at least some claim to fulfil its demands. Jesus was a real person

and corresponded in His actual appearance, at any rate largely, to the expectations formed of the Messiah in the most spiritual minds of later Judaism. In the Christian incarnation alone the fact had a distinct right to be regarded as the adequate counterpart of the idea.

But in His figure, also, it is not impossible to find the traits of that divine portrait which the Gentiles too had seen afar off. Just those features in their sketch, which but faintly appeared in those to whom they looked as its original, stand out most clearly in Christ's character and life—such things as a great tenderness, high optimism, suffering love, heroic humility, and unselfish self-assertion. We must, however, leave to a later chapter the consideration of this last claimant's right to rank as God Incarnate. Here we need only reassert as incontestable that He alone has a real claim to be considered for that position. If ever or anywhere, it was in the Roman province of Syria in the time of Pontius Pilate that 'the hope of all the ends of the earth' found fulfilment.

But this leads us on to say in conclusion that the claim of Jesus is not merely the best instance of the working out of a general idea. The Christian does not believe merely in an incarnation which was the realisation in fact of a more or less universal expectation. His belief possesses specific features and makes special claims. The fulfilment, if it be so, differs in important points from the hopes, not merely

of all other Messianic developments but from those of the Jews themselves. It only claims to meet the most radical and spiritual elements in the anticipation. So here we come to the parting of the ways. For it has become obvious, in going through the three religions, that there are many distinctions, some of which have been pointed out. But the Christian contrast, both with them and its Jewish forerunner, will come out more clearly in following chapters."

Here it is only necessary to state roughly, as a result of our comparison between these religions, that there are differences of *kind* in the types of incarnation towards which devotion is directed. These vary from one conceived as Bearer of the Light of God up to One Who is regarded as the 'Express Image of His Person.' The former, whose main work is to teach true *ideas* about God, is not much more than a species of super-prophecy, differing in degree of inspiration only from other 'spirit-born' men. The latter is thought of as One Who in His own personality, through the manifestation of His character in word and work, through action and suffering, reveals what God is in Himself. Here, in summing up our survey of incarnational religion, we may hope that it has been sufficient to justify a single statement with regard to these differences. To be brief, it may be put in a simple shape. No *pre-Christian* faith gives anything but the first of these forms, while nothing *non-Christian* provides anything like a thorough presentation of the second view.

Looking ahead, it may be possible to give here a preliminary reason for this which will lead us on to the consideration of the Christian faith. Apart from the question of how far the fact corresponded to it, we may venture to point out two forces in explanation of the greatness of the idea. The superiority of the Palestinian development in regard to the richness of its Messianic belief seems due to the combination of two factors. The first is the acknowledged greatness of the prophetic religion in Israel—the spiritual and moral breadth and depth of the later Jewish belief with regard to both God and man. This comes out with special clearness in the fact that none of their great ones, even Moses, received anything like worship. And the second is the equally undisputed greatness of Jesus of Nazareth. The features of His historical life were displayed and brought home to the Christians in all preaching of Him. As embodied in the Gospels, they have been of supreme importance in moulding the Christian idea of Divine Incarnation. It is to study these facts that we must now proceed.

CHAPTER XI

HISTORICAL FEATURES OF CHRISTIANITY

WHEN Jesus of Nazareth came into Galilee 'proclaiming the good news of God and saying "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand,"'¹ He announced nothing unheard of. Rather, He brought a new certainty to an old message, an assurance of things hoped for. Indeed, all through the later spiritual history of Israel there echoes the longing cry of those who waited, hungering and thirsting for the 'day of the Lord,' when He should set humanity's house in order and let men feel His rule in the world that is His. These watchers all look for that blessed time with anxious hearts. The hour of daybreak has not yet struck for them, but the morning twilight has come, making the darkness such as can be felt. So the yearning faith that it will soon be dawn can be seen gathering strength throughout the prophetic writings, as the night seems almost blacker over Israel, and makes them turn more and more to the light behind the clouds which must break forth, since God is the sun of righteousness.

But it is especially in that important period, which

¹ Mark i. 15.

lies for us between the Old and New Testaments, that this demand of hope had become pressingly urgent, as the chosen people became more and more involved in the iron meshes of first the Seleucid and then the Roman Empires. For their saints and seers, their rabbis and martyrs, it seemed to be the gap between two ages, and all true Jewish hearts looked forward. The strength and character of their expectation during this interval varied in sympathy with the spiritual depth or shallowness of the diverse souls in the nation, but they were all united in the confidence that God some day would come to judge and reign. It is impossible here to cite examples from the apocalyptic literature outside our Bible, but one at least contained in it is well known. For we breathe the atmosphere of this hope at its strongest and purest in the two first chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, which are in their ground-lines the most 'pre-Christian' part of the New Testament.

At the root of this certainty lies the hard-won faith of the prophets of Israel in the righteousness as well as the omnipotence of God, 'Who will ~~not~~ suffer the triumph of any but the righteous nation, or at least the righteous remnant of it, His 'righteous servant.' In its most popular form, however, this belief was so inextricably blended with national ambitions and temporal expectations that it largely lost any spiritual character and degenerated into a mere patriotism which combined loyalty to

Church and State in an exclusive fanaticism. And, indeed, it is this religious race-selfishness which provides the main source of opposition to Jesus. But, in the higher forms of Jewish hope, the most intensely spiritual outlook is found in the circles where the expectation is most eager. Here the fervent practice of a highly ethical code is seen, leading to a great sense of personal and national sin, and a deeply patient trust in God Who will purify and redeem. It is almost as though all the most desperate sense of unworthiness and the most earnest waiting upon the goodness of the Lord that had ever been experienced by the human soul had found concentrated expression in this sorrowing, hoping, bitter-sweet certainty of God. As beggars, poor in spirit and in the goods of this world, these Symeons and Annas watched for the salvation of the Lord. They were prisoners of hope who steadfastly and humbly turned to the strongholds of the divine riches, awaiting with up-turned faces the opening of heaven's windows.

But in the fire of their affliction and of the other-worldly longings which it kindled, there was present more than a hope merely, as it were, of heaven-sent rains to save them from the flames. The consolation to them was not simply the thought of some divine scheme of things, slowly but justly working itself out through the far-reaching power of God's almighty hand. For them nothing less than the coming of God Himself could quench the fierce

heat of their desire, since to save them in the midst of the burning, fiery furnace, they too need walking beside them 'One like the Son of God.' So at the centre-point of their expectation we find a personal figure, God's viceroy, Who, while 'found in fashion as a man,' should be in a most real sense God Himself, the Prince in His Kingdom come. Such is the focus of their outlook, and it is the slow development and uncertain prevalence of this master hope that forms the chief interest of the later Hebrew and earlier Aramaic literature for us. That is why we value it, so far as it has come down to us, even in its most curious forms and fragments. For in what has survived of it we can still trace various shapes of such an expectation, and perhaps, in some places, even its almost complete suppression. But there is still extant evidence sufficient to show that the prominence and centrality of this hope steadily increased during this period, so that round it more and more there gathered the ideas and passions which were associated for the Jew with 'the day of the Lord' and 'the coming of His Kingdom.'

At least two traditional forms of this general attitude of hope seem to have been powerfully current when Jesus dwelt in Nazareth. There is the older, prophetic expectation of a divinely anointed king from the stock (physical and spiritual) of David. He was to be One Who should, in God's name and power, restore the Kingdom to Israel, and initiate in a real form a return of the theocracy

indefinitely extended. This is the ordinary shape given to the hope in the later prophets, for instance Ezekiel.¹ It was to such presentations of it that all the less spiritual ideas of the time attached themselves. For in some phases of them the Anointed One (the Messiah in Jewish language, the Christ in Greek) was regarded as primarily an earthly prince, although endowed with special powers and prerogatives from God. But in others this aspect fell into the background. The outlook became less political and more spiritual and the Christ appeared more superhuman. For anointing was a priestly and prophetic, as well as a royal mark, and so the Messiah might be essentially an other-worldly being, Whose relation with God would be so uniquely close that He alone could be fully called 'the Son' of God as well as of David. So God and man would be one Christ for the later Jew.

This side of the strictly Messianic hope is closely related to, indeed almost identical with, the other main form of the expectation—that of the Son of Man. The history of this is important. Starting later than the other, it probably took its rise from what seems a misinterpretation of the figure in Daniel's vision which follows the four beasts. We only find it, however, as fully developed doctrine in that part of the Enoch literature which is known as 'the Similitudes,' and dates from some time in the first century before our era. Here the person

¹ *E.g.* xxxiv. 33, xxxvii. 24.

² Daniel vii. 13.

of the 'Son of Man,' Who is also called 'the Anointed' and 'the Just One,' is central in the writer's outlook on the purpose of God, and is a pre-existent divine-human figure, Who in the last times shall come to rule and judge all the world in the authority of God. For this writer the divine deliverer starts by being in heaven, and his human lineage is overshadowed. But there can be no question as to either the human form or the superhuman content of 'the Son of Man' for the circles where this writing had currency, so that it is extremely important to notice that it alone of the non-canonical books is quoted by name in the New Testament,¹ and can be shown to have shaped, at least to some extent, the thought of almost every writer in it.

It is significant also, as we must now go on to see, that, in Daniel's original use of it, the phrase 'Son of Man' appears to have meant (as is explained in the interpretation of the vision²) "the saints of the Most High," i.e. the righteous Israelites, who were suffering persecution for their faith at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes. It seems as important as it is certain that the character has become personified in this case." For it is not improbable that the process, which thus for the later hope transformed this collective type into a personal figure, was repeated in regard to another even more crucial prophecy, the second Isaiah's picture of the Suffering Servant.³ Little doubt exists that as the passage

¹ Jude 14.² Daniel vii. 25-27.³ Isaiah liii. etc.

left the writer's pen it was intended to represent the fact of Israel as the righteous remnant, oppressed, yet trusting and serving Jehovah. But in the New Testament this is consistently applied and alluded to as a prophecy of Christ. We have no evidence that before Jesus it was ever considered as bearing a Messianic reference. But neither indeed, if we (like our fathers) had no Enoch, should we know that 'Son of Man' meant more than man for His contemporaries. We have, however, fairly good evidence¹ that He regarded the Suffering Servant as Messianic prophecy, although there are only slight references to it in His sayings. He was, according to the accounts, always referring to 'the Scriptures' as demanding His death and resurrection, and the second Isaiah's utterances were almost the only passages in pre-Christian literature which could be said to do so. Here, and here alone, was the sense of suffering carried right up into the heart of the relation between man and God, and, we shall see, this is of the essence of the Gospel of Christ, as the first Christians learnt it from their Master's words, works, and passion. Whether, then, He accepted an interpretation current in some narrow ring of expectant souls, or whether He was the first to find in the picture of the Suffering Servant a reference to His mission, there is some probability that it

¹ This point is doubted by good authorities, but it is impossible to go into it fully here, and it does not in any case affect the disciples' devotion, which was profoundly influenced by it.

profoundly affected at least His presentation, if not His understanding, of His person.

In any case, it would seem that here too, as nowhere else, the forms had been prepared in which a perfect incarnation to meet man's need could be conceived. In the hope of later Israel alone among the religions of the world there appears such a presentation of the figure for which they looked as would allow one who claimed to fulfil it to be very God and very man. Jesus, in applying these expectations to Himself and finding their satisfaction in His own mission and person, was entering into the one line of development which gave a natural historical setting for His superhuman claims, and yet allowed the claimant to be, and to view Himself as, fully human. In the shapes which this hope had received in the later Jewish world into which He was born, such a man could be really God Incarnate without destroying the qualities of divinity: God could be thought of as dwelling perfectly in such humanity without derogation or blasphemy of His nature. This is important. For as we have seen that the Expectation in the later Jewish mind gave concentrated expression to all man's longing for 'God with us,' so now it appears that its picture of the Expected One contained all the elements needed for the presentation of a real incarnation. When Jesus took these up and applied them to Himself, He merely claimed that this figure referred to Him, and to Him alone.

The Messianic beliefs which Jesus and His disciples saw fulfilled in His whole person, His powers and work, His mission and passion, enabled them, within the bounds of ordinary human ideas conditioned by historical development and contemporary outlook, to regard Him as perfect God and perfect man. For Jesus Himself had a firm faith in His actual possession of the very qualities and prerogatives always attributed to God's Messiah. This made it humanly possible for Him to be conscious of super-human power,¹ while yet being called to suffer and die as man rather than use it to vindicate His claims. Such a conviction also brought His followers after His death to see in that humiliation His triumph, and to believe in Him as exalted yet ever-present, ready to save to the uttermost. So it is this body of hopes, gradually developed but widely spread and passionately held, that forms the background from which the figure of Jesus the Christ stands out so vividly in the little books where the first followers enshrined the good news of His Coming.

Jesus then appeared in a waiting world. The signal which He took for His first public announcement was the death of one who, while denying his own power to fulfil that expectation, yet pointed to the coming of Another strong to do so. John had regarded himself as the roadmaker of the Messiah ;

¹ I am not inquiring whether He possessed it—the Temptation narrative proves that He believed He did.

his washing was a sacrament of expectancy, his call to repentance and righteousness was a summons to waiting. He does not seem to have proclaimed the immediate nearness of the Kingdom so much as its certainty,¹ and for him the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit was surely coming but had not yet manifested Himself. The centre of John's revival was the Jordan, in the wilderness of Judea. So when the young Galilean came all the way from Nazareth to this place, He must already have felt some special connection with the work and person of this new Elijah. In the very moment when He came up out of the water, He was finally shown who John was and Who He Himself was called to be. The Vision and the Voice seem to form the climax of revelation by which He came to the consciousness of Himself as the Anointed One—that conviction of His super-human calling and power against which the great temptation in the wilderness was immediately directed.

The Messiahship was not for Jesus a mere title—the Messiah was a person with a special character and mission. In this respect, the details of what He heard and saw in that baptismal experience are significant, for the dove (as which he saw the Spirit) is always in the Old Testament prophets a bird of mourning, and in the law a sacrifice for purification; and, in the voice heard, although the frame of the words come from the Psalms and Isaiah, the

¹ See page 192, note 1.

keynote 'Son well-beloved' occurs only in connection with Abraham and Isaac,¹ and so rings clear with God's call to the willing offering up of that son. Hence it is indicated that from the start He knew His Own personal work was to be purgative suffering, His motive sorrowful love, but the end God's will done, His Kingdom come through the sacrifice of His Son. The dedication and surrender necessary for this may have been made all the more poignant by a desperate hope that God might again accomplish His purpose with some substitute for the death of the Son Himself, as in the case of Isaac long before. But the call to die had been heard—and was accepted.

From this point we can trace no development in Christ's self-consciousness, but only in the application of it. Now at the age of thirty He set out with every power a-strain to carry out His calling, and the story as we have it from this time on is of how He did it. He did not now have to discover by painful experience what He found Himself led to be and suffer; of that (at least in outline) He was already assured, as is most significantly shown not only by the call but by the testing of His acceptance which follows it—the so-called Temptation in the wilderness. This trial is recorded among the 'Q' sayings of Christ, and can therefore be trusted at least in outline, especially since its contents are so primitive in colouring. All the three acts of this narrative are assaults upon Jesus' interpretation of His Sonship by sugges-

. ¹ Genesis xxii. 2.

tions of ideas compatible only with other understandings of the Messianic mission. As the result of this 'temptation,' the wonder-working, God-encased world-ruler is rejected—the true Son must live upon God, trustful to the last, and intent only on His worship and service.

It must have been clearer than daylight to Jesus that such a call meant, apart from divine interposition, at least a death like that of John, of which He heard soon after; yet the only effect of this warning was the immediate proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom which He knew was now so close, because He was to bring it in Himself, triumphant through suffering. The message is no longer merely 'Repent,' as was John's¹—it is more positive as well, 'Believe the good news.' Now, too, disciples begin to be gathered and sent out again to herald the Coming. But it is noticeable that the preaching of the 'apostles' (=missionaries)² is described as merely of the Johannine type, and accompanied with John's water-baptism. This, however, is perfectly consistent with what we have said of Jesus' Own belief at this time, since the recognition of Him as the *Messiah* by Peter is distinctly placed later.³ For at this point, although Jesus Himself, with His Own consciousness of His Messiah-

¹ Mark i. 4. John's preaching in the original tradition contained nothing about the Kingdom as 'having come near' (as Matthew iii. 2 has it); that is reserved in Mark i. 15 for Christ.

² Mark vi. 12.

³ *Ibid.* viii. 29.

ship, had the Gospel to preach, and therefore did not Himself prepare by baptism, the disciples had not yet a full Gospel and so still used such baptism. The assurance that the Kingdom of God is verily hard on them only comes with the certainty that they know Him Who shall establish it and reign in it. Even when they do realise this, they misunderstand what Spirit both He and they were of. It was only when such a coming as they looked not for had overthrown the old hopes that they see the meaning of much that they had not understood. That was how they remembered it afterwards. He accepted their claim for Him, but never for a moment their interpretation of it: the first open prophecy of His sufferings comes immediately on the heels of the first avowal of their adherence to His Messiahship.

The general outline of these recorded recollections of theirs seems the only self-consistent understanding of the course of events. For He accepted all the prerogatives of Messiah, while striding up with set face to hostile Jerusalem and imminent death. That seems a certain fact. Also, such a view alone absolutely explains the whole tenor of His sayings about that Son of Man He claimed to be—*now* not having where to lay His head, but *coming*, coming in glory on the clouds of heaven. As after the first baptism with water it had been revealed to Him Who He was in calling, so would it be only after the second baptism of blood that He would verily have fulfilled that calling in fact and brought in the Kingdom, of which

His earthly ministry was but the shadow cast before. It was the prospect of this which in the Garden of Gethsemane seemed so faint and its cost so racking to bear, and on the Cross at last it was doubt of this that had broken His heart before there burst from His lips the 'great cry' of triumphant certainty.¹

Whether He was right or not in believing that God had conquered through His sacrifice has been, and will always be, the great issue between His followers and His foes. In any case, it is certain that within a short period ('three days') of His death on the Cross many, who never doubted that He had died, were fully convinced that His death was not the end. However we explain this belief, its existence almost immediately after Jesus' burial is one of the few indubitable facts of real importance in history. How the body of believers arrived at this certainty we cannot tell, except that it was accompanied with many phenomena which they took as assured tokens of His presence in their midst. But we also cannot doubt that it (they said 'He') generated in them so new a life and so strong a confidence that they quickly made a stir such as not the utmost fulfilment of their wildest hopes could ever have produced. Now at last they have their Gospel—that Gospel which they now see their Master had 'all through their misunderstandings carried in His heart and

¹ The 'great cry,' the effect on the centurion, and the actual words of the utterance in the Greek (*ἐγκατέλιπες*=*didst Thou*), all point to its giving expression to Christ's recovered sense of victory, but the usual assumption is that it did not.

out into His life and death. So the passion of conviction with which they can now proclaim a dying yet living Messiah makes their old hopes seem pale and faltering. They knew Him now, and were already in His Kingdom, as being subjects and worshippers of its Chief. It was indeed as yet fully to be manifested only when He came again, but still it was a present fact already. The fresh air of that new heaven and earth already blows over those who know the central figure in the 'world that is to come'—Jesus, dead yet alive, and the Source of Life to those who believe on His name, Messiah.

Here was news of the Christ indeed. An expectation of One bearing that title was then so common that the very name was good as an exorcism.¹ But now that is not all—there is a change, and the crowds see men using that name with a strange power and peace, and meaning by it that very Jesus Whom all believed to have died, and been cast into the common pit, where His very body would speedily have become irreconisable. How this paradox came to pass men outside could not understand, although the Nazarenes told them their explanation and persuaded many to believe it. The indubitable fact, however, was that these people were reproducing fragments of their Master's thought and character, inspired by the belief that many of them had seen Him and all of them had received His Spirit. Stranger still, they all were looking for His appearing to shine as the lightning

¹ Mark ix. 38-41.

from the East to the West. Yet so must Saul, their enemy, have seen them, when with some such faith as this they appeared in that corner of the Mediterranean world—the earliest men who bore in their hearts the seed of the Christian Church.

At first all was overshadowed and sheltered by the fact that they continued to look for the Messiah—only now they knew His face. They suffered persecution with joy, they broke their bread for themselves and the poor with gladness, they praised God in the Temple, and they gave ecstatic voice to their new-found Gospel—but always with their eyes lifted towards the sky from which they expected their Lord at any moment to reappear in glory. Gradually, however, as they became more fully conscious of what their new life in His Spirit meant with all its fulness, and as the first generation of their brethren passed to be with Christ before His coming, they began to lay more stress on the reality of that 'earnest' of the Kingdom which they had already. The love of Christ was here and now, and though the prayer 'Maranatha' was still heard, it implied no longer such a world-shattering cleavage between its fulfilment and 'this present time.' The outlines softened, and in the end eternal life became conceived as continuously and progressively perfected here and hereafter.

Christianity did not, and never could, lose its essential other-worldliness or its deep sense of a purpose in history, but the old apocalyptic ideas

began to be translated into the less catastrophic terms of the mysteries. In these the Christian to-day, no less than his earliest brother, feels himself caught up and swept along in a great cosmic movement of redemption, while in the centre-point of all his view there still stands with ever-growing mystery and splendour the figure of One Who has made our shame His glory and bought victory through the sweat of death. Christ for the Christian is ever, like the raised body in the Apocryphal Gospel, passing upwards out of sight; but His feet stand firm on earth, and Mary Magdalene may still kiss the marks of the nails and know that all is well. In the sacraments the reference to the actual passion and death is still direct for the Christian—'the Christ of worship' is still 'the Jesus of history.' On Him the worshipper has set his faith, as on One Who died upon the Cross on Calvary, but lives to save to-day. Nothing less than this, whatever its justification, has been the attitude of Christian devotion towards the Incarnate.

CHAPTER XII

THE MARKS OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTION TO CHRIST

I TRIED in two previous chapters to say what seemed to be the historical relations between certain other religions I have mentioned and Christianity itself, and I went on to offer some suggestions as to the place that Christians, if they suppose their belief at least truer than these others, might yet give to them in their thought. It is very possible that this may have seemed something like an equating of their claims. In the last chapter I gave a very shadowy sketch of what I conceived to be the historical facts of the development of the Christian faith, which must have suggested to the reader some contrasts. In this chapter we must turn from its origins to the faith itself, in order to point out where I think the real differences lie, and to mark to some extent the distinctive characteristics of Christian devotion to Christ.

The first and most striking of Christian, contrasted with all other, forms of religious belief in an Incarnate, is an *unswerving insistence on the historicity of the facts.* This has always been the Christian attitude. The modern historical study of Christian origins is only the expression in the new intellectual forms of

that which has been at the root of all Christian faith,—the belief that its claim was based on fact that once *was*, that it only arose after, and because of, events. For particular time, place, and circumstance are essential for the Christian Incarnation and a knowledge of these for a right faith in the Incarnate.

It is not merely that Christianity is founded on historical facts—*that* is an objective question and conceivably open to doubt—but that it *feels* itself to be so, and *to itself* it stands or falls with the truth of those facts. The typical Christian can never say with the Hindu or the extreme modernist: ‘What does it matter about the accidental fact of history—whether there ever was such a person who revealed God? We have got the *idea*, and that is true, any way; what more do you want?’ ‘No,’ says the Christian; ‘if the Word did not really become flesh, then I cannot believe in Him; if in that historical figure I cannot see God, then I am without God in the world; as He said, it is only through Him that men come to the Father.’ The certainty of the ‘Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’ is bound up for the Christian with the knowledge of Him ‘Who once in time was slain.’ The Christian demands that the Incarnation for him should be not merely an idea or an illustration but an actual proof. This can for him only be obtained by a projection into events of history: it was, no doubt, always true, but could never have been known had it not been material-

ised into fact, and so given definite shape and substance in space and time.

And, what is more, the Christian feels that not only would the truth not have been *known* otherwise, but it would not even have been *true*—it would not have existed as a fact; for if God was not such as to send His only begotten Son, He could not have so loved the world. The character of God would have been different from that which the Christian attributes to Him, if He had not been One Who *must* reveal Himself by becoming flesh. From this point of view it is absolutely essential to believe at least that Christ was in the same tissue of events as we are ourselves, and that we are still able to come into touch with Him like any other historical person. It is true this would not be sufficient if it were all, but so much at least is necessary.

It is then this emphasis on history and the intimate connection of religious belief with it that constitutes one prime feature in Christianity. And such stress laid on the central importance of the historical only appears at the higher stages of religious growth and increases rather than diminishes with their advance.¹ In them there is all the difference of attitude between the historical and the mythological, the emphasis on fact and the joy in a story—and the conscious outlook of the Christian soul has always been essentially the former. Hence it comes that we see the spirit in the Church always turning:

¹ As Mr. Webb has recently pointed out, *Problems*, etc., p. 63.

backwards to the historical revelation and drawing only thence the inspiration to reproduce it.

With this characteristic goes a second, *the uncompromising claim to uniqueness and finality* advanced by the Christian on behalf of Jesus as incarnate God. There can be for his consciousness only one Christ, and anything else must derive its claim to value from Him. It is the historical fact of Christ which for the Christian makes *all* the difference. He ~~was~~ and is perfect, however little His Spirit has leavened the mass of His Church. Christianity has at its heart the unwavering assertion that *He* is 'the Light of the World,' and has always believed that this was why He said to those who followed Him that they would be 'the light of the earth'—all else but borrowed and reflected rays.

Such a view is clearly in contrast with the easy tolerance of Buddhism, which so readily fused with other strains of religion and in its most popular forms became simply one element in a people's life, as with Confucianism and Taoism in China. The Buddha made no such exclusive claims on the Buddhist as Christ on the Christian. Gautama had only found a way out of suffering which involved no personal uniqueness except an enlightenment supreme for his time, and the later developments of Buddhist worship have never asserted one single and complete Buddha. Hinduism, too, with its comprehensive syncretism has not now, and has never had, a compelling centre; its capacious periphery

is without any single radiating point. Thus Buddhism and Hinduism cannot compete in this respect.

The same is also true of the third subject of our study. Islam in its orthodox form does indeed claim for the prophet a certain uniqueness, but it is not that of a single personal revelation of God, but only, if one may put it so, of the certified interpreter, the genuine mouthpiece of the Highest—greater, but not different in kind from his predecessors. Mohammed's value to the faithful consists in what he *said* rather than in what he *was*. Shiite Mohammedanism, too, although it has much more claim to rival Christianity, has never maintained that there was any single unique figure in history supremely revealing God. Rather it held there was a succession of such revelations, through whom He was seen from time to time, or, perhaps in its full form, that there was always one somewhere if only he could be found. In none of these religions, then, is there anything really corresponding to what one may call the *centripetal retrospectiveness* of the Christian attitude.

Further, we can see that where Christianity resigns its claim to finality and uniqueness it disappears as such. For this reason Gnosticism was never able to propagate itself in Europe or even maintain its own existence. It was indeed only partially Christian, but we can see the same occurring in the Far East to a much more definite Christianity. In the Si-An-Fu inscription, *e.g.*, it is stated that.

'the Divine has many names, but all are one,' and it is implied that the Syrian-Chinese Church claimed for 'the luminous religion' (i.e. Christianity) only that it was as 'noble and true' as others—and Nestorianism was dying in China as in India. It is this unique claim to uniqueness that has caused the early and continued intolerance of Christianity for other beliefs. The Christian Church would not take quiet at any less a price than survival alone. Such solitude only has the Christian called peace. And this has been the reason why the consensus of Christendom has damned with its deepest contempt those who made compromise of their faith—the Gnostics and other syncretists—along with Judas.

The importance of this fact is obvious. It is not that this intolerance of other claims is in itself a proof of superiority, but at least it is a sign and source of strength. In any case, it forms a distinctive characteristic of the Christian's outlook, and shows that he believed from the first that in Christ he had the pearl of great price, for which all lesser goods must be sold and any proffered exchange refused. Further, it may possess a deeper significance. If we believe that enthusiasm and conviction ultimately attach to what is true, so far at least this passionate faith is an indication of value. It should also be noted that the claim to be unique is not a later growth in the Christian religion. It is based on, or at least embodied in, the assertion that 'no man knoweth the Father save the Son,'—a belief

which it derived from the single unique figure Who made that claim.

Thirdly, it was His figure, too, which inspired what has always been another most striking feature in His followers, viz. that, *while worshipping, they have yet aspired to imitate*. It is the fulness and richness of His life, presented to them as a moral ideal which was lived before it was preached, that they have felt drawing them to Him. Coming to Him was only possible for those who would take up the Cross and follow after Him. It is this conviction which has driven His followers through all the ages from the first, not merely to the supreme martyrdom of suffering death for Him but to the daily struggles of the life which might lead to that end.

From this it follows that true Christian worship has never been a mere dependence upon the incarnate Saviour, such as Bhakti and even some forms of professedly Christian mysticism have so often tended to become. Genuine Christianity has never been without a definite moral content, driving the Christian to definitely Christ-like action. And this has been true, not only because Jesus demands this of His disciples as the condition of coming to Him, but also because His character, His spirit, His personal life, which we can see and know as facts in our plane of events, are just such that they cry out to men to follow after Him—with however long an interval. That is at least the light in which Christians have always seen Him. And the truth.

of this is borne out by its converse. . For it is only where men have lost hold on the historical, in cases of debased emotionalism, that the worship of the Incarnate loses this driving power. In the more balanced faith there is always a sort of moral magnetism exerted by the vision of the historical figure, lifted up and drawing all men unto Him, not merely in the worship of feeling but also in effort of will.

The fact that the Christian practice of charity is unique in thoroughness is admitted. This has often appeared in such facts as that the institution of hospitals outside Christianity has usually been in direct imitation of it, and in direct opposition to Christian successes. Such was the case in the pagan revival under Julian in the ancient world, and in the similar efforts of the Neo-Buddhists to-day. It is true, however, that ancient Buddhism under Ashoka made an attempt to establish such charitable work, but it soon fell into abeyance. Moreover, as we have noticed before in speaking of Buddhist charity, even when the practice is the same, the motive and spirit is, at least in early Buddhism, very different. With the emperor Ashoka, for instance, it arose from, and went with, the search for inner tranquillity and peace from desire. This would be disturbed and broken if (as in the case of the war against the Kalinga which preceded his conversion) he allowed his selfish desires to make him interfere with, or hinder his promotion of, the good of others.

So Buddhist, and indeed all non-Christian, benevolence was not the outcome or accompaniment of love, but only of detachment from self. When Ashoka says his subjects are 'all of one family,' he does not view them as united by love, but only by mutual tolerance. Here, of course, Christianity stands entirely opposed—if its charity is not the outcome of love it is nothing. 'If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal,' said the most imperial spirit in its first age. Such 'love,' of course, was bound to sacrifice any peace that could be won by getting rid of desire, since it was itself the most positive and powerful form of desire. But the Christian of all ages has testified to the supremacy of the richer joy won through attachment to the great interests of God's Kingdom—the activity of love.

In this connection, of course, one ought to discuss fully the moral ideal presented by Christianity and Christ, but there is only space here to call attention to one point which follows from what I have said of charity. This is the emphasis laid in Christianity on the blessedness both of suffering and of the relief of suffering. It is a paradox, but lies at the heart of all Christian belief in the Incarnation. For, according to it, God suffers that He may relieve the suffering of men. In this respect only one form of faith enters into comparison. It is true that Babism also is a religion which has held suffering in high esteem. The Imams all died by persecution: the Bab himself,

expected and received it, and the whole sect passed through a baptism of blood. But the purpose of suffering in the Babi view was not to relieve distress but to win personal approvedness. The whole measurement of the chasm which separates them in this respect from early Christianity is visible in the contrast between the Beatitudes, for example, and the fierce early Babi denunciations against all except the true believers.¹ On the other hand, it is fair to remember that the Bab gave up the Mohammedan idea of the 'Holy War' (jihad), but he never practised or preached love towards enemies.

Here, however, we discover a difficulty in Christianity—the apparent contradiction between its universal love and its uncompromising sternness, and still more between its gentleness of doctrine and the seeming harshness of its practice. On this question any cursory remarks here offered must be inadequate. But intolerance for corruption of belief never properly leads to persecution. Although Christians have often been persecutors, it was not as Christians. The heart of Christianity, as expressed classically in the New Testament, is absolutely opposed to it. The character of the Christ set before us is fearless and free in denouncement of the oppressor, but the

¹ An instance of their attitude is given where the early Babi chronicler refers to the death of the persecuting Shah thus: 'Soon afterwards His Majesty, Mohammed Shah, went to Hell' (E. G. Browne, *Tārīkh-i-jadīd*, p. 291 note).

whole of His own conception of His Messiahship differed essentially from others mainly in the point that He entirely refused to regard physical force as either a means to, or a constituent element in, the Kingdom.

These are two important points out of many which could be mentioned with regard to the moral aspect of the Christian devotional type. But it is rather one mark with regard to it in general that I would wish here mainly to emphasise. It is a fact of experience that the character of Christ with all its many-sided facets is a moral ideal which, at least up to the present, shows no sign of being exhausted. We can see clearly that so far Christianity has not realised, even if all the Christian nations be taken together, more than half of its possibilities. It is now a platitude to say that as Palestine is half way between the East and the West, so the character of Christ has an Eastern and a Western aspect. All that has been even attempted at present by Christendom has been the reproduction of some traits which are more in harmony with Western ideals. And yet it seems as though the nations of the world would each find their national virtues given their right proportion in the character of Christ, and this ideal as a whole is that which the Christian Church feels bound by its very existence to realise.

For Christianity of all the religions of the world alone turns back to an historical figure as its only inspiration and ideal. The forces of the spirit, which

in other religions break up and destroy what has been before, in Christianity are always striving to refashion what has been perfect once, thus marking a clear distinction of tone. Christ is the same 'yesterday' as well as 'to-day' and 'for ever.' That has been the Christian faith. If it is true, indeed, we cannot say *why* it should have been in Palestine that 'the only begotten Son' came and gave life. But there is no reason to doubt the fact merely because we cannot see the reason. And it is quite certain, in any case, that so unique a faith needs some singular explanation.

And here we come to a fourth keynote of that faith. I spoke of the Christian spirit as *striving to refashion*.• And this marks another distinctive and certain hall-mark of historical Christianity. For, although Christianity looks back for its inspiration, it uses it in looking forward. To the Christian Church the spirit of Christ 'which shall lead you into all truth' is the same as that 'which shall bring all things to remembrance.' It is this looking to the future to bring back the past, and to the past as showing in little what the future will show writ large, that is perhaps the most unparalleled feature of Christian devotion to Christ. This *double* attitude is a new note. We have spoken of the backward-looking side of it, but the forward-facing aspect is still more remarkable.

• Let me explain. Outside the narrow and comparatively short stream of Messianic Judaism there was

only one religion which looked to the future with any confidence. This was Mazdeism,¹ the faith founded by Zarathustra and modified by the Magi, the ancestors of the Parsees. But the Magian hope of a Saviour differed from Christianity in that it showed the dualistic sense of a conflict which had never yet been settled, although, as the Zoroastrians hoped, it would some day reach an end in Ormuzd's victory over Ahriman. As they believed, these two had been at strife since the beginning of the world, and no human saviour (Saoshyant as they called such a person) had yet been more than champion for a time in the struggle. This was the nearest approach, distant as it was, to the Christian confidence outside its Jewish ancestry. All the other religions either looked back to a golden age in the far distant past or had no ideal of perfection, and both types were 'without hope in the world.'

So, then, the completion of the Jewish hope, as the Christians found it fulfilled in Christ and His doctrine of Himself and the Kingdom, was the creation of a new force in the religious sphere. It is from this wellspring of hope that all the progressive, reforming elements in the world since then have drawn their assurance. Historically, they have all had direct contact with that source, so that it is this 'eschatological' element in Christianity which has given rise to all their looking forward as well as backward for

¹ On this see J. H. Moulton's *Early Zoroastrianism*. If Magi came to Bethlehem, they were seeking the future 'Saoshyant.'

the fulfilment of the great linking of God with men. And here, too, it seems especially important to mark that it is the figure of Christ that stands central in this hope; it is *His* return, *His* coming which has always been expected by His Church.

So Christianity becomes a religion of growth and progress, and the Christian hope, whether true or not, is really the only basis for such a daring supposition as that anything better than mere change will actually take place. It is only because, as the Christian believes, Christ *was* once incarnate that he may hope He will be perfectly *reincarnate* in the Church. And apart from such a ground, 'evolution' gives no basis for such a belief. There certainly never was in any secular sense a golden age, and whether there ever can be is more than doubtful apart from this particular religious view. But the golden age for Christianity is *both past and future*; it was once and shall be again, not as then in the single personal life, but in the wider, composite, all-inclusive but not more perfect, organism of the corporate embodiment. And further, for the Christian as for the seer of the Apocalypse, this is not a hope merely of this earth, nor of the future alone: the new Jerusalem is already built, and only waiting to descend from heaven.

We are bound to reverence this Christian optimism, whether we think it well founded or not,—that is, if we value such a view of the world-process at all. Most of us do so, in fact, since without such faith

effort towards progress is deprived of object, because there is nothing to attain, and of confidence, because there is no assurance of success. In this case we must recognise that it is belief in the Incarnation as a fact that alone gave rise to such a faith, and alone would seem sufficient to give a basis for any such view. 'Progressive incarnation' and 'evolutionary amelioration' are unscientific dogmata, the unhealthy mists of hopeful minds, the shallow refuges of a crude optimism, *unless* we can believe with all the saints that in spite of appearances God *has* won the victory in the flesh and will fully manifest what is already complete.

But this faith is only possible for the Christian in virtue of another and even more intimate trust, which we may count as the fifth mark of his belief in Christ. For to reinforce and sustain his confidence in the Christ of history there comes the knowledge of the Christ of experience on Whom he relies. It is this assurance of the *Immanent* Christ (if I may coin a phrase) that supports him. He is certain of the Spirit of Christ as His personal presence. This is real to the individual but more real to the society. And in the Christian Church this is not as in Buddhism, simply the belief that the community carries the light which was fetched from heaven by the Master, but rather that He Himself personally dwells in the society as His body. This real presence rests not on a single representative as with the Shiites; still less is it conceived as perfectly manifested.

But He is felt all the more to be actually there with, and in, the community, as the very moving force of all that is done and to be done in His name.

This belief has been universal wherever Christianity has been alive, and the Holy Spirit has always been essential to the Christian Trinity. And that has been not merely as an effluence. He is thought of as a personal Spirit, since He is the Spirit of Christ and God. But it is important to notice that Christian belief has never departed from monotheism by supposing that there was what we should call more than one *personality* in God. Since this term has become available, it has caused some confusion with the old term 'person' as applied to God, which had a different meaning. To make this clear, one may hazard an attempt to illustrate the Trinity in a sentence. One may say that God, Who spoke through His Spirit (that is, Himself manifesting Himself) to the prophets,¹ let His Spirit become flesh in Christ, Who, being that Spirit, still lives not only with God but in God's people.

And here we see the vital difference between Christian and all other beliefs in a double way. For it is through the perfect and permanent embodiment of the Spirit in Christ as we see Him in the New Testament that the Church of Christ knows '*what Spirit it is of*.' But nevertheless she is persuaded that even now He is among her members, and is the informing principle of life in all the body. So,

¹ Heathen as well as Hebrew.

it is only because he is drawn by Christ Who lives in the 'Beyond which is Within,' that the Christian can approach and understand the perfect revelation of God in the historical figure of Christ.

This torso must stand as all that I can offer at present for a sketch of Christian devotion, and its distinctive character in these respects. It is not possible here to sum up conclusions or even impressions as the result of such a comparative study of religions, and I can only trust that its value for my readers, as for myself, may not be the less real for that reason. As will be seen, I have not attempted to justify the general need for an incarnational form of religion—that 'belongs to another inquiry.' Nor have I tried to prove that Christianity fulfils all the conditions, since I could not do so without widely transgressing the limits of Comparative Religion. Nor have I had any thought of defining Christianity as a whole or even offering more than a few points as a description of its devotion to Christ. All I have endeavoured to do has been first to show what are the characteristics of the different alternatives and what have been their relations with Christianity, then to suggest what might be the attitude of convinced Christians to such other religions, and finally to point out that Christianity possesses unique qualifications for being the religion of the Divine Incarnation.

If I may say a personal word, I am sure that

this study has led me to hold more clearly, and, I think, on firmer foundations than ever before, a belief in the uniqueness both as fact and value of the Christian faith in the Incarnation. To take a far-off but not untrue analogy in another sphere, I feel that the superiority of the Christian consciousness in religion is like the supremacy of the Greek genius in art; that it is the sudden bloom of a gradual growth; that in it is found complete what is elsewhere at the best fragmentary; that the scattered beauties outside it are here united in one organic whole; that there is nothing really comparable to it before or since; and that it is possible to trace it as a powerful factor in the creation of all that is most like it—even as all the great art of Northern India germinates in the Hellenic influence of the Macedonian invasion. Just so, it seems to me, has been the appearance of the Christian faith in the world. Half-way between the East and the West, half-way between the dawn of history and to-day, there comes to the Christian a figure Who, in all the richness and beauty of a perfect humanity, yet claims to be the Son of God, the fulfilment of all hopes, still with us, loving and powerful, for ever. ‘If any man say, Lo here is Christ, or to there, believe it not.’ ‘For as the lightning, so the Coming of the Son of Man.’

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty
at the University Press, Edinburgh

